GAMBIT

INSTRUCTIVE MODERN CHESS MASTERPIECES

Deepen your understanding of chess by studying 50 sensational games

Igor Stohl

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Game 1

Boris Gelfand – Alexei Dreev

Tilburg 1993

Queen's Gambit Declined, Semi-Slav Defence [D48]

1 d4 d5
2 c4 c6
3 ♘c3 ♘f6
4 ♘f3 e6
5 e3 ♘bd7
6 ♗d3 dxc4
7 ♗xc4 b5
8 ♗d3 ♗b7

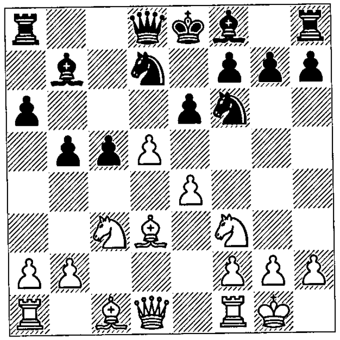
The amount of Meran theory has grown rapidly and the older 8...a6 has gained several competing alternatives: 8...b4, 8...♗d6!? and most notably the move chosen by Dreev.

9 0-0

If White wants to fight for an opening advantage, he has to choose between the text-move and 9 e4 b4 10 ♘a4 c5 11 e5 ♘d5, and then 12 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 0-0 or 12 0-0!? immediately.

9 ... a6
10 e4 c5
11 d5 *(D)*

White rarely ventures anything else at this point, as after 11 e5?! Black among others has 11...cxd4 12 ♘xb5 ♗xf3! 13 ♕xf3 ♘d5 14 ♘xd4 ♘xe5, holding the balance easily.



11 ... c4

In 1993 one could pass this move over without any comment, but subsequent theoretical developments have shown this natural push to have a drawback – White's f3-knight gains access to the d4-square. Therefore Semi-Slav devotees such as Dreev, Shirov and others have gradually switched to the more flexible move 11...♕c7!?. Black postpones the pawn advance and makes a useful developing move. Just one topical game to illustrate this modern trend: 12 dxe6 (12 ♗g5 c4 13 ♖c1!? is a barely tested new idea, which deserves attention; White wants to discourage queenside castling) 12...fxe6 13 ♗c2 ♗d6 14 ♘g5 ♘f8 15 f4 0-0-0 16 ♕e1 e5 17 ♘d5!? ♗xd5 18 exd5 exf4 19 ♗d2 ♖e8 20 ♕h4 with an unclear position, Piket-Khalifman, Dortmund 2000.

12 ♗c2 ♕c7

A similar strategic pattern as in the game arises after the less popular 12...e5. Although the central tension has been released, it's not easy for White to prove a tangible advantage. Gelfand-Kamsky, Linares 1991 went 13 ♕e2 ♗d6 14 ♗g5 0-0 15 ♘h4 ♗e7 16 ♘f5 ♘xd5 17 exd5 ♗xg5 18 ♘d6 and now according to Gelfand 18...♘c5! 19 ♕xe5 ♕f6 20 f4 b4! 21 ♘xc4 ♕xe5 22 ♘xe5 bxc3 23 fxg5 cxb2 would have led to equality. As no substantial inroads can be made by piece-play, a more promising approach for White is to undermine Black's queenside pawn-chain: 13 ♘e2!? ♗c5 14 b3 cxb3 15 axb3, although even here after 15...0-0 his edge is minimal.

13 ♘d4 *(D)*

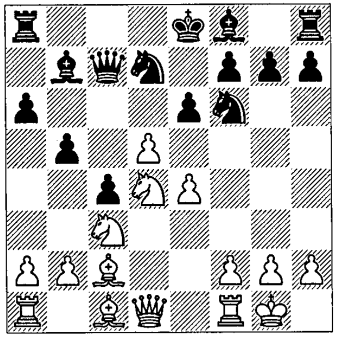
13 dxe6 fxe6 14 ♘d4 ♘c5 wasn't considered dangerous until in 1996 Lautier came up with 15 ♗e3!. Black's task is then far from easy; e.g., 15...e5 (15...♗e7 16 b4! cxb3 17 axb3 clearly favours White) and now:

1) 16 ♘f5 ♖d8 17 ♕f3 ♗d6 18 ♖ad1 0-0!? 19 ♕g3 ♘fxe4 20 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 seems quite OK for Black:

1a) 21 ♖xd6?! ♖xf5 22 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 23 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 24 ♕g4 ♘d6 25 ♖d1 ♕f6 26 ♗c5 h5! and Black retains the extra pawn.

1b) 21 ♗xc5 ♗xf5 22 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 23 ♕xe5 ♖d7 with equality.

2) 16 ♘f3!? has superseded the inventor's original intention and promises White an edge. Although after 16...♘cxe4 17 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 18 ♖e1 ♗d6 (18...♖d8 19 ♕b1!) 19 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 20 ♘g5 ♗d3 21 ♕f3 0-0-0 22 ♕a8+ ♔d7 23 ♕xa6 ♖b8 Black managed to hold a draw in Gelfand-Bareev, Novgorod 1997, his exposed king caused him numerous problems throughout the game.



13 ... e5?!

13...♘c5! is a more flexible and better possibility. We will have a closer look at this move when we examine Kasparov-Kramnik, Dos Hermanas 1996 (Game 19). At this point let's just mention the practically untested alternative 13...0-0-0!? with the idea that 14 dxe6?! is met by 14...♘e5.

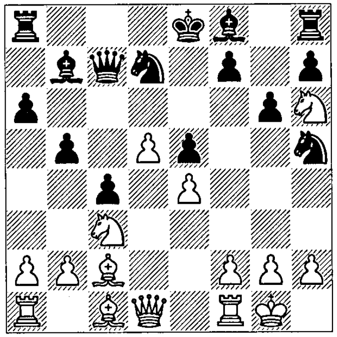
14 ♘f5 g6
15 ♘h6

Compared with the positions mentioned after 12...e5 White can't effectively play b3 or a4, but he has other pluses: a lead in development as well as the unpleasant h6-knight. Black must get rid of this thorn in his flesh to coordinate his forces.

15 ... ♘h5!? *(D)*

This is certainly more testing for White's concept than 15...♘g8?! 16 ♘xg8 ♖xg8 17 ♕f3 ♗d6 18 b3 b4 19 ♘d1 a5 20 bxc4 ♘c5 21 a3 ♖b8 22 axb4 axb4 23 ♘b2 ♗c8 24 ♘d3 with an extra pawn and attacking chances to boot, Szmetan-Morović, Buenos Aires 1992. In this game White managed to transform his advantage into something more lasting, as Black's king remained permanently exposed.

16 ♕f3?!



Logical, but let's look at another natural developing move first: 16 ♗e3 ♘f4 17 ♘g4 and now:

1) 17...h5?! is premature due to 18 ♘xe5! ♕xe5 19 ♗d4 (19 g3?! ♘h3+ 20 ♔g2 ♘xf2 21 ♖xf2 ♗g7 22 ♗f4 ♕d4 23 ♖d2 ♕b6 is less clear, as 24 e5 0-0 25 e6? fails to 25...♕xe6) 19...♕g5 20 g3 ♖g8 21 ♗e3 ♘h3+ (21...♗d6 22 ♔h1) 22 ♔g2 ♘xf2 23 ♕e2. White regains his piece and Black's forces lack coordination.

2) Therefore safer and better is 17...♗d6! 18 g3 h5 19 ♘xe5 (19 gxf4? hxg4 20 ♕xg4 exf4 21 ♗d4 ♘e5 is obviously unsuitable for White) 19...♘h3+ (19...♗xe5!? 20 gxf4 ♗xf4 21 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 deserves attention as well) 20 ♔g2 ♘xf2 21 ♖xf2 ♗xe5. Contrary to line '1', Black has firm control of e5 and his position is preferable.

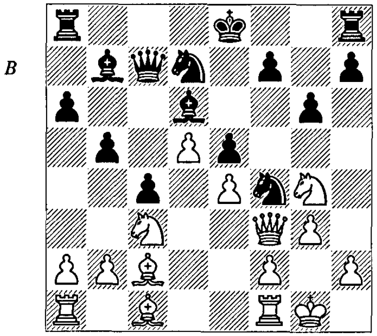
White's idea is to weaken Black's kingside in exchange for his outpost on h6, but more to the point was the prophylactic 16 g3!?. The intention is to finish development first (♗e3, ♕e2) and perhaps later consider pawn-breaks on the queenside or kingside (♘g4 and f4). It's far more difficult to see what Black should do, as after 16...♗c5 White can play 17 ♔h1 with a quick f4. I believe White retains a comfortable advantage, which is also borne out by the fact that 13...e5?! hasn't been repeated in serious practice since this game, despite its result.

16 ... ♘f4
17 ♘xf7

This forcing move probably isn't the ideal solution, because from now on the positional factors start to speak for Black. Therefore 17 ♘g4!? with the threat of ♘xe5 deserves a closer look:

1) The unnatural 17...♗g7 18 g3 ♘h3+ (18...♘h5 is unpleasantly met by 19 ♘h6!) 19 ♔g2 h5 20 ♘e3 ♘g5 21 ♕e2 f6 22 a4 b4 23 d6! and ♘cd5 gives White a strong attack.

2) More logical is 17...♗d6 18 g3 *(D)*:



2a) 18...♘h3+? now loses a piece in view of 19 ♔g2 h5 20 ♘f6+.

2b) After 18...♘h5, 19 ♘h6 or 19 ♗h6!? enables White to retain the initiative.

2c) Therefore Black must choose the principled continuation 18...h5!:

2c1) 19 ♘xe5?! is playing with fire: after 19...♘h3+ (19...♘xe5? 20 ♕xf4) 20 ♔g2 ♘xe5 21 ♕f6 ♖h7! 22 ♔xh3 Black has a promising attack for the pawn. It's difficult to choose from the tempting possibilities. 22...h4 23 g4!? (23 ♔g2 hxg3 24 hxg3 ♖h2+ 25 ♔g1 ♗e7 26 ♕f4 ♗g5! 27 ♔xh2 ♗xf4 28 ♗xf4 g5!) 23...♗e7 24 ♕f4 and 22...♘g4 23 ♕g5!? are not so clear, so perhaps best is 22...♗e7!? 23 ♕f4 g5 24 ♕e3 ♗c8+ 25 ♔g2 h4, when White's king is in grave danger.

2c2) Definitely a more practical choice is 19 ♘e3 ♘h3+ 20 ♔g2 ♘g5 21 ♕e2 f6. Black's position is somewhat passive, but rather solid and certainly playable. The wild attempt 22 f4!? exf4 (if this scares Black, the solid 22...♘f7 is also possible) 23 gxf4 (not 23 e5? fxe3 24 exd6 ♕xd6 25 ♗xg6+ ♔d8 26 h4 b4, when it's Black who is attacking) 23...♗xf4 24 d6 ♗xd6 (24...♕xd6 is weaker in view of 25 ♘xc4) 25 ♘ed5 ♕d8 (25...♗xd5? 26 ♘xd5 ♕d8? 27 e5!) 26 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 27 ♗xg5 0-0 28 ♘d5 ♗xd5 29 exd5 gives White just about sufficient compensation for the pawn.

17 ... ♔xf7

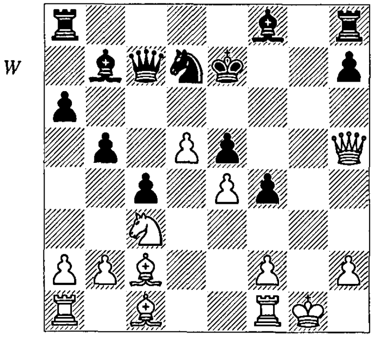
18 g3 g5

18...♗d6? 19 gxf4 exf4 20 ♘e2 g5 21 ♕h5+ ♔f8 22 ♘d4 gives White a tremendous attack.

19 gxf4 gxf4

20 ♕h5+ ♔e7 *(D)*

Good or not, Black's king must stay in the centre. 20...♔g7? 21 ♔h1 ♖g8 22 ♗xf4! (22 ♖g1+? fails to 22...♔h8 23 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 24 ♗xf4 exf4 25 e5 ♘xe5, as h7 is protected) 22...exf4 23 e5 gives White a decisive attack; e.g., 23...♕xe5 24 ♕xh7+ ♔f6 25 ♘e4+.



21 ♕h4+ ♔f7

21...♘f6? 22 ♗xf4! exf4 23 e5 rips Black's position wide open. However, can he afford 21...♔e8!? 22 ♗d1 ♗e7 here? Long-term strategy (space advantage on both flanks) speaks for Black, and if his king manages to get to c7 unscathed he should be better. Or was Dreev only gaining time by repeating? We will probably never know, as Gelfand himself spurns the perpetual.

22 ♗d1?!

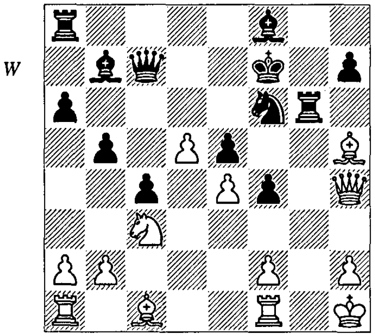
Objectively White probably should have preferred 22 ♕h5+. However, his motives are easy to understand. This was the second game of a mini-match in a knockout tournament and a draw would have led to a rapid-chess playoff. Gelfand didn't want to risk this and pinned his hopes on the normal time-control.

22 ... ♖g8+

23 ♔h1 ♘f6

24 ♗h5+ ♖g6! *(D)*

An absolutely stunning sacrifice, especially as it's not forced. 24...♔e7? can again be discarded outright due to 25 ♗xf4!, but an alternative was 24...♘xh5 25 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 26 ♖g1+ ♔h8 27 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 28 ♗d2. White has some initiative, but nothing decisive is in sight. In this sense Dreev's move is objectively stronger, as now he starts dictating the course of the game.



25 ♗xg6+

Forced, since after 25 ♖g1 ♘xh5 26 ♕xh5 ♔g7 Black consolidates easily with a clear advantage.

25 ... hxg6

26 ♖g1

The first consequences of the consolidating sacrifice are clear. White's pressure has abruptly been terminated and he must adjust to defensive mode. Black starts gradually preparing advances on both flanks (...b4, ...g5-g4). Gelfand's task is much more difficult, although the position is still quite unclear. Black can improve his position by natural moves, whereas White must make some difficult choices. In the course of the game White continues to ignore his development and will be cruelly punished. However, after the simplistic 26 a3?! ♗e7 27 ♗d2 ♖g8! 28 ♕h3 ♗c8 29 ♕g2 g5 followed by ...g4 Black rules on the whole board. Perhaps 26 f3 ♗e7 27 ♕h3, with the idea that 27...♗c8 is met by 28 ♕h6!?, was a better alternative; then White can play ♖g1 only when necessary.

26 ... ♗e7

27 ♕h6

After 27 ♕h3, Black cannot play 27...♗c8? in view of 28 ♕h6, while even 27...b4?! isn't ideal since after 28 ♘e2 ♖g8 29 ♕e6+ ♔f8 30 f3 White's queen becomes an unwelcome guest. However, after 27...♕b6 or 27...♕d6 White's problems are very similar to those in the game.

27 ... ♖g8

28 f3?

After this logical move Black gets a chance to unleash a tremendous attack with a further sacrifice. White should have continued 28 a3. Then:

1) First we will examine a slower move, 28...♗c8?!, when after 29 f3 Black has a choice:

1a) 29...♕b6 allows 30 ♗xf4! (after 30 ♖g2 the tactical shot 30...g5! with the fabulous idea 31 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 32 ♕xg5 ♗g4!! 33 fxg4 ♕f2 tips the scales in Black's favour) 30...exf4 31 ♕xf4, when White's pieces and pawns are suddenly very much alive.

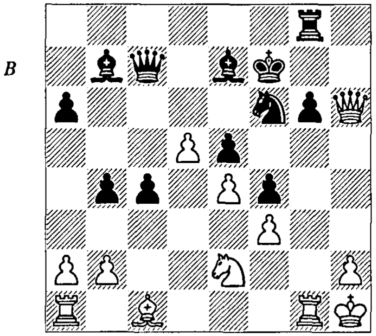
1b) 29...♗d7 30 ♗d2. Here Black has no obvious way to improve his position and probably must go for the repetition with 30...♗f8 31 ♕h4 ♗e7.

2) A far more effective way to get in the desired ...g5 is 28...♕b6! 29 f3 (29 ♖g2 g5! 30 ♖xg5 ♖xg5 31 ♕xg5 ♕xf2 32 ♕g2 ♘xe4!) 29...♕f2 30 ♕h3 ♗c8 31 ♕g2 ♕b6. After forcing the queen to retreat, Black can finally pursue his own ambitions, but White's cause is still far from hopeless.

28 ... b4

29 ♘e2 *(D)*

This move prepares the liberating sacrifice on f4, but White never gets around to it. The alternative 29 ♘d1 with the idea of controlling e4 and g4 after ♘f2 also allows 29...♘xd5! (29...c3!?) 30 exd5 ♗xd5 31 ♕h7+ ♖g7 32 ♕h3 ♕c6. Now after 33 ♔g2 ♔g8! the queen is suddenly in serious trouble, while 33 ♖f1 g5 gives Black a strong, probably decisive, attack. Note that both the a1-rook and the c1-bishop haven't moved yet!



29 ... ♘xd5!

Otherwise White plays ♗d2, followed by a doubling of rooks on the g-file.

30 exd5 ♗xd5
31 ♖f1

31 ♕h3 ♕c6 32 ♖f1 ♗f6 is very similar to the game: Black plays ...g5, followed by ...g4 or ...e4, and opens up the long diagonal.

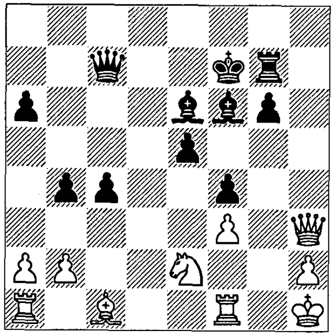
31 ... ♗f6!

Black prevents the aforementioned sacrifice. After the careless 31...♕b7?! 32 ♘xf4 exf4 (32...♗xf3+? 33 ♘g2) 33 ♕xf4+ White is alive and kicking.

32 ♕h7+

Now 32 ♘xf4 exf4 33 ♗xf4 (33 ♕xf4 ♕xf4 34 ♗xf4 ♗xb2) 33...♕b7 doesn't help White, since both b2 and f3 are *en prise* and ...♖h8 is also a threat.

32 ... ♖g7
33 ♕h3 ♗e6 *(D)*



34 ♕g2?!

Dreev points out White could have offered stiffer resistance after the active 34 ♕h8!. He found a promising line only after the game: 34...♖g8 35 ♕h7+ ♗g7! 36 ♕h4 ♖h8 37 ♕f2 ♗f8! 38 ♗xf4 exf4 39 ♕d4 ♗g7 (39...♖h4!?) 40 ♕xf4+ ♕xf4 41 ♘xf4 ♗xb2 and Black's queenside pawns should decide the outcome.

34 ... g5
35 a3

A strange move in a difficult situation, but White wants to gain the c3-square for his knight or at least open the a-file. Even the more logical 35 h3!? ♖h7 36 ♘g1 ♕c8 37 ♔h2 ♗e7 with the idea ...♗c5 is no bed of roses for White.

35 ... g4
36 axb4

36 fxg4 ♖xg4 37 ♕f3 ♕d7 is murderous.

36 ... ♗d5
37 ♘c3 gxf3

37...♗b7? 38 ♘e4 enables White to set up a strong blockade.

38 ♕f2?

The last mistake, which loses by force. The alternatives were:

1) 38 ♕d2 ♗b7 39 ♖a5 f2+ 40 ♘d5 ♕d6 41 ♖xf2 ♔e6!. Unlike the e4-square in the previous note, the d5-square can't be protected and Black liquidates into a won endgame.

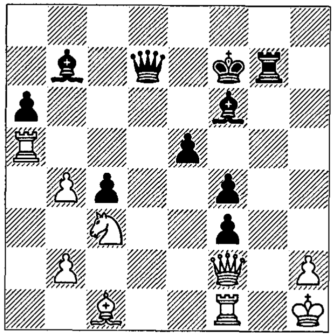
2) White could have fought on only with 38 ♕xg7+! ♗xg7 39 ♘xd5 ♕c6 40 ♖a5! (40 ♖d1? ♕g6 41 ♖g1 ♕d3 is curtains) 40...♕g6 41 ♖xf3 ♕e4 42 ♔g2 ♕c2+ 43 ♖f2 ♕xc1 44 ♖xa6, although the connected passed pawns should be the decisive factor after 44...♕d1.

38 ... ♗b7

Now the threat is ...♗h4.

39 ♖a5 ♕d7 *(D)*

This move prevents the last attempt to close the deadly diagonal, although 39...♖g2 40 ♕c5 ♕d7 41 ♕xc4+ ♔g7 followed by ...♕h3 was also sufficient.



40 ♘d5

Desperation, but 40 ♖g1 ♗h4! 41 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 42 ♕g1+ ♔h7 offers White no better chances.

40 ... ♗xd5
41 ♕d2

41 ♖d1 ♕h3 42 ♖axd5 ♖g2 leads to a quick mate.

41 ... ♗c6
42 ♕xd7+ ♗xd7

43 ♖xa6

43 ♖xf3 ♗c6 44 ♖aa3 ♗h4! followed by ...♗f2 drastically demonstrates the helplessness of White's pieces.

43 ... ♗h3
44 ♖f2 ♗h4
0-1

Resignation is certainly not premature, as after 45 ♖a7+ ♔f6 46 ♖xg7 ♗xf2 the f-pawn will queen shortly.

Summary

Flexibility is one of the important components of modern chess strategy. Here we see this principle in action as early as the opening. Firstly Black could have delayed the otherwise strategically desirable advance ...c4 by 11...♕c7!?. The notes to White's 13th move indicate why 11...♕c7!? is more popular nowadays; it also has the additional aspect of keeping more options open for Black, who often refrains from playing ...c4 altogether. The second moment is even more pronounced. It's not so easy to say whether 12...e5 or 13...e5?! is a strategic concession, but once we have an advantageous way of postponing such a decision, it's usually the road to take. Later on White also sins in this respect – 16 ♕f3?! would have been more effective if prepared properly. Let's recall Nimzowitsch's famous axiom: "The threat is stronger than its execution".

We have already expanded in some length on the purely chess reasons behind 24...♖g6!. Here one also has to stress the immense psychological effect of such a move. The most important aspect of the consolidating sacrifice was that it suddenly turned White into a defender. It's very important to realize this immediately and seek the right mix of activity and prophylaxis to hold the position. Even such a strong player as Gelfand couldn't adapt and committed quite a few inaccuracies and mistakes in the second half of the game. On the other hand, Dreev's performance was outstanding: he correctly sensed the crucial moment after 29 ♘e2, when he couldn't strengthen his position any further by manoeuvring and had to take decisive action.

Game 2

Joel Benjamin – Vishy Anand

PCA qualifier, Groningen 1993

Sicilian Defence, Richter-Rauzer Attack [B63]

1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3 d6
3 d4 cxd4
4 ♘xd4 ♘f6
5 ♘c3 ♘c6
6 ♗g5

The Richter-Rauzer is unequivocally more aggressive than 6 ♗e2, while on the other hand the lines are less forcing than in the relatively well explored labyrinth of the Velimirović Attack, i.e. 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♗e3 a6 8 ♕e2, where most of the crucial variations lead to drawn positions.

6 ... e6
7 ♕d2 ♗e7

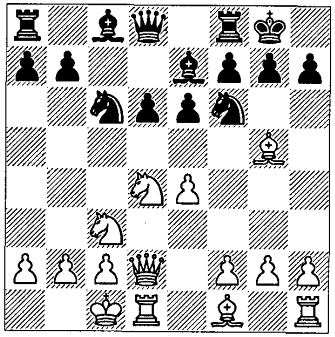
Black's choice at this point still remains largely a matter of taste. The line 7...a6 8 0-0-0 h6 will be examined more thoroughly in Karpov-Salov, Buenos Aires 1994 (Game 8).

8 0-0-0 0-0 *(D)*

In order to prevent White's next move, Black sometimes chooses the move-order 8...♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 0-0, when 10 f4 transposes to 8...0-0 9 f4 lines, while other continuations are not too dangerous for Black.

9 ♘b3

Out of all the tested possibilities, this move, first played by Alekhine in 1936, has been one of the two to withstand the test of time. White avoids exchanges, which in principle favour the defence, and targets the d6-pawn as well. On the other hand, voluntary decentralization is not White's usual course of action in a sharp Sicilian. 9 ♔b1 allows an immediate and effective 9...d5!, while the slower 9 f3 has another disadvantage – to implement the g4-g5 advance, White must lose time with his dark-squared bishop. The most direct move is 9 f4 ♘xd4 10



♕xd4 ♕a5. Even nowadays Black has little reason to fear 11 ♗c4 ♗d7 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♗c6 14 ♗d2 ♘d7 15 ♘d5 ♕d8 16 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 17 ♖he1 ♖fd8 18 ♕g4 ♘f8. The more recent try 11 ♔b1!? is less explored, but dangerous. White's plan is to prepare the central advance thoroughly by first protecting his g5-bishop and developing the f1-bishop to a more suitable square. Good knowledge of the possible pitfalls is required; probably the strongest is 11...h6 12 h4 ♖d8 13 ♗e2 (13 ♗d3 ♕c5!? is playable for Black) 13...♗d7 14 ♕e3 ♗c6 15 ♖d3 ♔f8!? 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♗f3, Hraček-Kharlov, New York Open 1998. Now Black can play either 17...h5!? or even 17...♗xc3 18 ♖xc3 d5!?, with a satisfactory position in both cases.

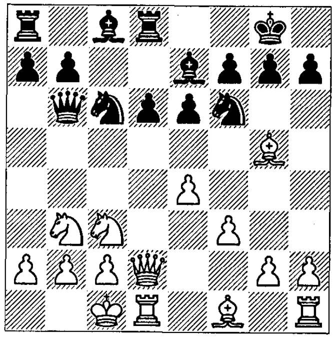
9 ... ♕b6

The most usual reply. 9...d5?! 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 exd5 ♗xc3 12 ♕xc3 exd5 13 g3 just saddles Black with an isolated pawn with nothing much to show in return, while 9...a5?! weakens Black's queenside and makes the possible ending after 10 a4 d5 11 ♗b5! unattractive for him. The unorthodox 9...a6 10 ♗xf6 gxf6 11 ♕h6 ♔h8 12 ♕h5 ♕e8 13 f4 ♖g8 14 ♗d3 ♖g7 15 g4 b5 16 h4 b4 17 ♘e2 e5 (17...a5 18 ♘bd4!?) 18 f5 a5 19 ♖dg1! ♗b7 20 g5 a4 21 ♘d2 ♘b8 22 gxf6 ♗xf6 23 ♖xg7 ♗xg7 24 f6 ♗xf6 25 ♖f1 ♕e7 26 ♘f4! gave White a raging attack in Liss-Leko, Budapest 1993.

10 f3 ♖d8 *(D)*

11 ♔b1

Tactical prophylaxis against the thematic ...d5 push, which would solve all Black's problems after, e.g., 11 h4. The most frequently played move, 11 ♗e3, also doesn't promise White too much: 11...♕c7 12 ♕f2 d5 (12...♘d7 13 ♘b5 ♕b8 14 g4 a6 15 ♘5d4 ♘c5!? 16 ♘xc5 dxc5 17 ♘xc6 ♖xd1+ 18 ♔xd1 ♕d6+ 19 ♔c1 ♕xc6 is less consistent, but also quite playable, Baumegger-Wittmann, Austrian Ch (Leibnitz) 1996) 13 exd5 ♘xd5 14 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 15 ♖xd5 exd5 16 g4 ♗f6 17 ♔b1 ♗e6 18 g5 ♗e5 19 f4 d4! 20 ♗c1 ♗d5 21 ♖g1 ♗d6 with active counterplay, Illescas-Kramnik, Alcobendas (1) 1993.



11 ... ♕c7

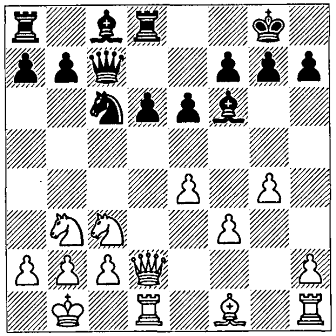
Ironically enough, this position had previously arisen in a game between the same players, except that in Wijk aan Zee 1989 Anand was White. The unsuspecting American obstinately played 11...d5?! and after 12 ♗xf6 dxe4? (12...♗xf6 13 exd5 ♗xc3 14 ♕xc3 exd5 15 ♕c5 gives White a lasting edge) 13 ♗xe7! ♖xd2 14 ♘xd2 he lost material, as Black must refrain from 14...♘xe7 15 ♘c4 ♕c7 16 ♘b5. In our game Anand keeps the option of the central thrust open, postponing the decision to match his wits in a pawn-storm race with 11...a6 12 ♗e3 ♕c7 13 ♕f2 ♘d7 14 g4 b5 15 g5.

12 ♗xf6?!

Such a move can be made by either a very strong, or a very weak player. Although White gains time to advance his kingside pawns, the drawbacks are also quite obvious – Black gets an active pair of bishops and his position is without weaknesses. My overall impression is negative; I can recall Bronstein half-jokingly, half-seriously remarking that the dark-squared bishop is the most precious minor piece on the board. 12 h4 again allows 12...d5; e.g., 13 ♗xf6 dxe4! 14 ♘b5? ♖xd2 15 ♖xd2 ♕g3!. A more usual method to get the attack going is 12 ♗f4. Although White will have to move the bishop once more, one feels the piece is worth it: 12...a6 13 g4 ♘e5 14 g5 ♘fd7 15 ♕f2 b5 16 h4 b4 17 ♘e2 a5 18 ♘ed4 a4 19 ♘b5 ♕b6 20 ♗e3 ♕b8 21 ♘3d4 ♗a6 22 h5 ♖c8 23 g6! fxg6 24 hxg6 ♘xg6 25 f4 e5 26 ♗h3! and White won after an extremely dramatic fight in Hamarat-Stern, corr. 1994.

12 ... ♗xf6

13 g4 *(D)*



13 ... g6

This risky move gives White a target, but Anand intuitively felt that with an unopposed fianchettoed bishop he has nothing to fear. Of course you can't stop an avalanche barehanded; therefore 13...g5? 14 h4 h6 15 hxg5 hxg5 16 ♖h6 is bad for Black. However, leaving the kingside intact by 13...a6 14 g5 ♗e7 15 h4 b5 is a valid alternative and possibly superior, while 13...♘e5!? 14 ♘b5 ♕b6 15 ♘5d4 ♘g6 is also interesting.

14 h4 a6

15 g5

Naturally not 15 h5? g5 with a blockade.

15 ... ♗g7

16 h5 b5

17 hxg6 hxg6

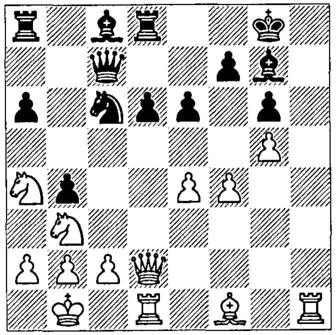
18 f4

Both sides pursue their goals in a straightforward manner; the direct threat is f5-f6, when Black would get mated. 18 ♗d3 is too slow in view of 18...♘e5, while 18 ♕h2 b4 19 ♘e2 a5 enables White's knight to retreat to a central square, but on the other hand Black's marching pawns also gain a strong impulse.

18 ... b4

19 ♘a4 *(D)*

Just as 18...b4, this is also forced. After 19 ♘e2 a5 White is too many tempi behind.



19 ... ♖b8

19...e5? is highly suspect in view of 20 ♕f2! with threats such as ♘b6-d5 and f5. Black wants to pay his regards to the wayward knight (...♘e7, ...♗d7) but he must protect the b4-pawn first.

20 ♕h2

"Triple on the open file and penetrate" is White's motto. Other examples in this book (Illescas-Andersson, Ubeda 1997 and Kasparov-Short, Sarajevo 1999: Games 24 and 43 respectively) will show us that it's often more effective to put the rook in front of the queen. Therefore, we should take a look at the interesting 20 ♖h4!? (20 ♗d3 stops ...e5, but after 20...♘e7 21 ♖h4 ♕c6!? 22 f5 {22 ♕h2 ♔f8 leaves White a tempo down in comparison with line '2'} 22...exf5 23 exf5 ♗xf5 24 ♖xb4 ♗xd3 25 cxd3 ♘d5 Black is better), when White wants to play ♕h2 and by ♖h7xg7 eliminate Black's main defender as quickly as possible. Black has a choice between activity and prophylaxis:

1) 20...e5 is the active move, but here Black has to reckon with 21 f5!? (21 ♗c4?! runs into 21...♘d4 22 ♕d3 d5! with a strong counterattack) 21...gxf5 22 g6 (even 22 exf5!? ♗xf5 23 ♗d3 is far from clear) 22...fxe4 23 ♗c4 ♗e6 24 gxf7+, when the king, stripped of pawn protection, will be a permanent source of worries for Black.

2) 20...♘e7 is more circumspect. After 21 ♕h2 (21 ♘ac5 is no better since after 21...a5 White's knight is not going anywhere as its

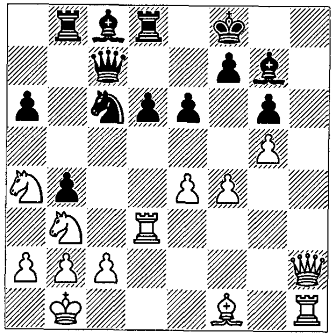
main task is to prevent ...a4) 21...♔f8! (Black must run; the lines 21...♕c6? 22 ♖h7 ♕xa4?! 23 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 24 ♕h6+ ♔g8 25 ♗b5! and 21...♗d7? 22 ♖h7 ♗xa4 23 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 24 ♕h6+ ♔g8 25 ♗c4! lead to mate and show the strength of White’s attacking ideas) 22 ♖h7 ♘g8 Black’s king appears to be in relative safety. However, the wild tactical idea 23 e5 dxe5 24 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 25 f5! renews the threat of ♖xg7 and leads to a murky position.

All this, in connection with the note to Black’s 21st move, indicates that 20 ♖h4!? was probably an improvement over the text-move.

20 ... ♔f8

A useful move in any case, but as Anand himself pointed out, it was connected with the dubious idea of preparing ...e5. The immediate 20...e5? simply loses to 21 f5 gxf5 22 ♕h7+ ♔f8 23 exf5, but playable was 20...♘e7!? 21 ♖d3 and because 21...♕c6? runs into 22 ♘ac5, Black’s best move is anyway 21...♔f8!, which transposes to note ‘2’ to Black’s 21st move.

21 ♖d3 *(D)*



21 ... e5?!

Active defence is usually an attractive and praiseworthy idea, but here it leads to great complications with unclear consequences. Moreover, Black had other, more solid ways to retain his positional pluses without allowing too many tactical chances:

1) 21...♗d7 and then:

1a) 22 f5 exf5 23 ♘ac5!? (after 23 ♖xd6 ♘e5 White’s position falls apart) 23...♗c8 (not 23...fxe4? in view of 24 ♘xa6) 24 exf5 gxf5 and White’s attacking prospects don’t look too promising; e.g., 25 ♖h3 ♗e5 26 ♖h8+ ♔e7.

1b) 22 ♖h3 ♔e7 23 ♕e2 (23 ♖h7 ♖h8 threatens ...♖xh7 and ...♖h8, and after 24 ♕f2 ♖xh7 25 ♖xh7 ♔f8! White doesn’t have sufficient major pieces to exploit the calm return of Black’s king) 23...♘d4!? (23...e5 24 ♖h7 is unclear) 24 ♘xd4 ♗xd4. Black has safeguarded his king and the active bishops give him an edge.

2) The cold-blooded 21...♘e7 is possibly even better. 22 ♖h3 and now:

2a) 22...♗d7 23 ♖h7 ♘g8 24 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 25 ♕h8+ ♔f8 26 ♖h7 ♔e7 27 f5!? exf5 28 exf5 is more dangerous for Black than line ‘2b’.

2b) 22...♕c6!? 23 ♖h7 (threatening ♖xg7) 23...♘g8! (23...f5? 24 gxf6 ♗xf6 25 e5 dxe5 26 ♗g2! ♕xa4 27 fxe5 gives White a decisive attack) 24 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 25 ♕h8+ ♔f8 26 ♖h7 ♔e7 27 ♕g7 ♖f8 28 e5 ♗d7! (not 28...♕xa4?, when 29 exd6+ ♔e8 30 ♖h8 ♕c6 31 ♖xg8 ♕xd6 32 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 33 ♕e5 turns the tables) and the tricks gradually peter out.

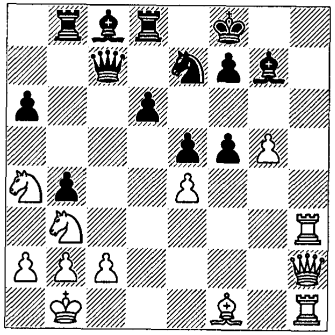
22 f5!

An integral part of White’s plan. The meek 22 ♗h3 exf4 23 ♕xf4 (23 ♗xc8 ♖bxc8 24 ♖h3 ♗e5) 23...♘e5 spells positional bankruptcy for White.

22 ... gxf5

23 ♖h3 ♘e7 *(D)*

The only move. White’s threat is ♖h7xg7 and moves like ...f4, ...fxe4 or ...♗e6 do nothing to stop it. The cowardly escape 23...♔e7 gives White a raging attack after 24 ♖h7 ♖g8 25 g6! fxg6 26 ♗c4. From now on, until the end of the game, Black defends by concentrating most of his forces around his exposed king.



24 ♖h8+

This is consistent with White’s play so far. However, there was an interesting positional alternative in 24 ♖h7!? ♘g6 25 ♗d3:

1) Now 25...fxe4? 26 ♗xe4 ♗b7 27 ♗xg6! (27 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 and 27 ♖xg7 ♗xe4 both get White nowhere) is very unpleasant for Black: 27...♗xh1 28 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 29 ♕h6+ ♔g8 30 ♗h7+ ♔h8 31 ♗f5+! ♔g8 32 g6 wins on the spot for White. After 32...♗e4 the most convincing is 33 ♘c3! with the point 33...♗xf5 (33...bxc3 34 g7) 34 ♕h7+ ♔f8 35 g7+ ♔e7 36 ♘d5+.

2) That leaves Black only 25...f4 26 ♘d2 ♗d7 27 b3. White’s idea is to play ♘b2-c4, ♘f3, etc. Black finds it very difficult to untangle his pieces; the once-proud g7-bishop has become a cripple. This position is at least unclear.

24 ... ♘g8

Black can’t afford 24...♗xh8? 25 ♕xh8+ ♘g8 26 ♖h7 ♗e6 (26...♔e7 27 ♖xf7+! ♔xf7 28 ♕h7+) 27 exf5.

25 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8

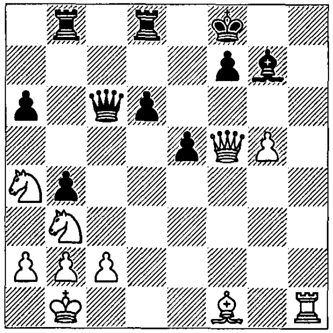
26 ♕h7+ ♔f8

27 exf5

Now it seems quite rosy for White; after 27...♕e7 28 f6 ♗xf6 29 gxf6 ♕xf6 30 ♗h3 he has regained material and kept the initiative. However, the alert tactician Anand has a worthy counter up his sleeve.

27 ... ♗xf5

28 ♕xf5 ♕c6! *(D)*



The point: Black finally targets the unhappy a4-knight. However, the fight is far from over.

29 g6 ♖b7

29...♖d7 is less natural, as it cuts off Black’s queen from the defence. However, even despite this it’s not easy to prove that White has any advantage after 30 ♖h7:

1) 30...♖c7 31 ♗d3 ♕xa4 (31...f6? 32 ♕h3 threatens ♖xg7 and is very good for White, while after 31...♖e8 32 ♖xg7!? ♔xg7 33 gxf7 ♖xf7 34 ♕h7+ ♔f8 35 ♕h6+ ♔e7 36 ♘ac5 White finally activates his stranded knight) 32 ♘c5! dxc5 33 ♖xg7 ♔xg7 34 ♕xe5+ ♔f8 35 ♕xc7 ♕e8 36 ♕xc5+ guarantees White a draw and he can even strive for more.

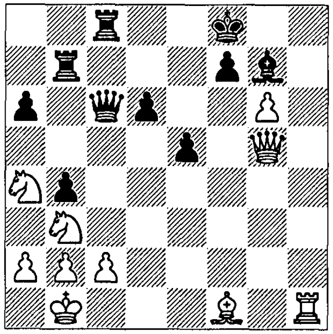
2) 30...♕xa4 31 ♗c4 ♖bb7 (not 31...d5? 32 ♘c5) 32 ♕h3 (the simple 32 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 33 gxf7 ♖xf7 34 ♕c8+ ♕e8 35 ♕xa6, with an unclear position, is also playable) 32...fxg6 33 ♗d5 (White is the only side in danger following 33 ♕e6 d5 34 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 35 ♕xd5 ♕d7) 33...♕b5!? and White should prudently resign himself to a perpetual with 34 ♖h8+ ♗xh8 35 ♕xh8+ ♔e7 36 ♕h4+.

30 ♖h7

30 ♘a5? is weak in view of 30...♕xh1 31 ♘xb7 ♕xb7 32 ♗xa6 ♕d7, but there was an interesting alternative to the natural attacking text-move, namely 30 ♕g5!?. This was subsequently even declared by *Deep Blue* as winning, without giving any lines, however. Matters are not quite that clear, but Black certainly has to be careful:

1) 30...♖e7? 31 ♗g2 (31 ♖h7 f6 is less clear) 31...♕xa4 32 gxf7 and, with ♖h8+ in the air, the attack is too strong; e.g., 32...♔xf7 33 ♕h5+ ♔e6 34 ♖d1! and Black’s king is trapped.

2) Thus 30...♖c8 *(D)* is forced:



2a) 31 ♗g2 and now:

2a1) 31...e4?! 32 ♘ac5! dxc5 (Black loses directly after 32...♖b5 33 ♕f5 and 32...♖e7 33 gxf7 dxc5 34 ♖h8+!) 33 ♘a5 ♕d7 34 ♘xb7 ♕xb7 35 ♖f1 is not an ideal solution.

2a2) 31...♕xc2+ is a better move. 32 ♔a1 and now:

2a21) 32...♖bc7 33 gxf7 (White's queen is overloaded after 33 ♘b6? f6 34 ♖f1 ♔e8; Black forces advantageous exchanges) 33...♖xf7 34 ♗d5 and as White's back rank is sufficiently protected, Black will have trouble with his exposed king.

2a22) 32...f6 is more to the point. However, now even if White loses the g6-pawn, he controls the central light squares, his bishop is a much stronger piece than the poor g7-bishop and also the knight can soon enter the game via b6. After 33 ♖f1!? the position is not clear.

2b) 31 ♕g2!? is an idea which deserves attention: 31...♖bc7 (31...e4? 32 ♘a5 ♕d5 33 ♗xa6 and 31...♕xg2 32 ♗xg2 ♖bc7 33 ♘b6 are weaker) 32 ♕xc6 ♖xc6 33 c3!? and it's very difficult to evaluate exactly what is going on, but White is hardly in any danger of losing.

30 ... ♕xa4
31 ♕g5?

Now Black gradually regains control of the game and further inaccuracies by Benjamin in his habitual time-trouble will only ease Black's task. White had two better moves:

1) 31 ♗c4 is interesting. Now:

1a) 31...♖dd7 transposes to note '2' to Black's 29th move.

1b) 31...♕d7?! 32 ♕f1 (32 ♕f3 e4! just helps Black) 32...♕e7 (32...f5 33 ♕h3!, with the threat of ♖h8+, is perilous for Black; moving the queen to h3 instead of h1 excludes the defence 33...d5 34 ♘c5 dxc4 35 ♘xd7+ ♖bxd7 due to the simple 36 ♕xf5+ ♔g8 37 a3) 33 ♕h1! (33 ♗xf7 ♕f6 enables Black to consolidate, as after 34 ♕xa6 he has 34...♖xf7! 35 gxf7 e4) 33...♕c7 34 ♗xf7 and White's attack is worth more than the exchange.

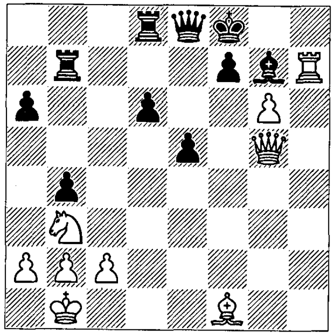
1c) 31...♕e8 32 ♖xg7 (32 ♗d5!?) 32...♔xg7 33 gxf7 gives White at least a perpetual, as 33...♖xf7? loses a piece to 34 ♗xf7 ♕xf7 35 ♕g5+.

1d) 31...d5 32 ♘c5! (after 32 ♗xd5? ♕d7 Black exchanges queens) 32...♕c6 (32...dxc4? 33 ♘e6+ ♔e7 34 ♕xf7+ ♔d6 35 ♕xb7 ♔xe6 36 ♕f7+ ♔d6 37 ♖xg7 gives White a winning attack) 33 ♘xb7 ♕xb7 34 ♗xa6 ♕d7 is only approximately equal.

2) As all the above doesn't promise White an advantage, 31 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 32 gxf7 is definitely the most practical. Black's king can't escape a perpetual check after 32...♕d7 (Black even loses after 32...♖xf7? 33 ♕g5+ or 32...♖f8? 33 ♕g4+ ♔h8 34 ♕h3+ followed by ♕g2+, while after 32...♔f8 33 ♕f6 ♖bb8 34 ♗c4 White has the freedom to choose when he gives the perpetual) 33 ♕g5+ ♔xf7 34 ♕h5+ ♔g7 35 ♕g5+ ♔h8 36 ♕f6+.

31 ... ♕e8 *(D)*

Huddling closer to the king is consistent with the note to move 23. 31...♖c8, with the idea that 32 ♖xg7? is met by 32...♕c6! (and not 32...♔xg7?, which loses to 33 gxf7+ ♔xf7 34 ♕f5+), is risky due to 32 ♗g2!.



32 ♗xa6?!

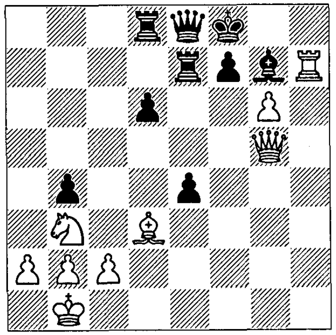
32 ♗d3 threatens ♖xg7, but this is easily parried by 32...♕e7. 32 ♘a5 ♖c7 33 ♘c6? f6 is also insufficient for White. Anand himself indicated a better practical chance: 32 ♗g2!? d5 (32...♖c7? 33 ♖xg7!), and now:

1) 33 ♘c5?! ♕e7 (33...♖e7? 34 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 35 gxf7+ ♔xf7 36 ♗f3 ♔f8 37 ♗h5 ♖h7!? 38 ♘e6+ ♕xe6 39 ♕xd8+ ♔g7 40 ♕g5+ ♔h8 41 ♕d8+ ♕g8 42 ♕f6+ ♖g7 43 ♗g6! ♕c8 44 ♗f7 ♕h3 45 ♗xd5 and it's hard to imagine how Black can avoid a perpetual) 34 ♕e3 ♖c7 and Black convincingly beats off the attack.

2) After 33 ♕h4 White threatens ♖h8+, but with 33...♖b6 Black's rook joins the defence; after 34 gxf7 ♔xf7 35 ♕f2+ ♖f6 36 ♕a7+ ♕d7 37 ♗xd5+ ♔e8 the extra exchange will eventually tell.

3) 33 ♘a5 ♖c7 (33...♖bd7 34 ♘c6 fxg6 35 ♖h1! is not ideal for Black) 34 ♕h4!? (34 gxf7 ♖xf7 35 ♘c6 ♖d6 leads to nothing for White) 34...fxg6 35 ♖h8+ ♗xh8 36 ♕xh8+ ♔e7 37 ♕g7+! ♕f7 38 ♕xe5+ ♔f8 39 ♕h8+ ♕g8 40 ♕f6+ ♔e8 41 ♘c6 and it will not be easy for Black to realize his large material advantage, as his forces lack coordination.

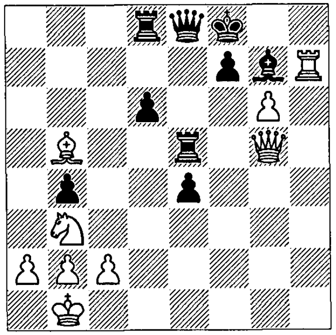
32 ... ♖e7
33 ♗d3 e4 *(D)*



34 ♗b5

34 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 35 gxf7 ♖e1+ 36 ♘c1 ♖xc1+ leaves Black a piece up, but 34 ♗c4! would have posed more technical problems, though after 34...d5! (34...♖e5?! 35 ♕h4 revives the nasty threats on the h-file and 34...fxg6? 35 ♕d5 ♕f7 36 ♕a5! ♕e8 37 ♕d5 gives White at least a draw) 35 ♖xg7 (35 ♗xd5? ♖e5) 35...♔xg7 36 gxf7+ ♔xf7 37 ♗xd5+ ♖xd5 38 ♕xd5+ ♔f8 the passed e-pawn should win for Black.

34 ... ♖e5! *(D)*



Black returns his extra material to force simplification. The following moves are forced.

35 gxf7 ♖xg5
36 fxe8♕+ ♖xe8
37 ♗xe8 ♖g1+
38 ♘c1 ♔xe8
39 a4?!

The final mistake. Only with 39 c3 bxc3 40 bxc3 ♗xc3 41 ♔c2 could White have wriggled out of the strait-jacket, but after 41...♗f6 the united passed pawns would decide the game anyway. Now he loses a piece.

39 ... bxa3
40 bxa3 ♗c3

There is no defence against ...♗d2.

41 ♖h4 d5!

0-1

Summary

The whole game was influenced by White's strategically extremely risky decision on move 12. The exchange of the g5-bishop for a knight also considerably strengthened one of the basic tendencies of the Sicilian Defence – endgames with a solid central pawn-structure and semi-open c-file are usually quite pleasant for Black. Although 12 ♗xf6?! furthers the advance of the kingside pawns, it's also counterproductive as far as the attack is concerned. The pawns are supposed to weaken the opponent's king and create space for one's own offensive pieces, but swapping an important bishop hardly furthers these goals. Another direct consequence of White's chosen plan was the necessity to isolate his knight on a4 to slow down the impending counterattack. This sharpened the do-or-die character of White's play; he eventually lost his a4-knight and had to rely solely on the power of his attack.

All this is general theory, which in practice works well for Black under one important condition – if he manages to beat off the offensive. And this is not so easy; especially in the first phase of the conflict Black has to choose from tempting alternatives, the consequences of which are difficult to foresee clearly. In this sense ♗xf6 is an interesting concept, which greatly intensifies the tension of the game. I would like to point out two moments, which in my opinion were crucial from Black's point of view. Both 13...g6 and 21...e5?! were active defensive measures, involving a change of the pawn-structure. As closer scrutiny shows us, especially in the second case Black would have done better to trust the inherent strength of his set-up and pursue his own active intentions. In the attractive tactical shoot-out that followed, another important practical component of the game caused White's downfall – he was simply too short of time in the critical phase.

Game 3

Anatoly Karpov – Ivan Morović

Match (game 1), Las Palmas 1994

Queen's Gambit Declined, Tarrasch Defence [D32]

1 c4 ♘f6

2 ♘f3 e6

3 d4 d5

4 e3

This rather tame move doesn't appear too often in Karpov's practice. He generally prefers either the most principled 4 ♘c3 or the Catalan with 4 g3. Most probably he didn't want to reveal any opening secrets just before Linares.

4 ... c5

5 ♘c3 ♘c6

A popular alternative in this position is 5...a6. It's usually in Black's interest to break the symmetry first, because otherwise White's chances to gain an advantage increase due to his extra tempo. Here the idea is to transpose to the Queen's Gambit Accepted with ...dxc4 and ...b5. After 6 cxd5 exd5 Black has prevented the unpleasant check on b5, and the possible continuation 7 ♗e2 ♘c6 8 0-0 ♗d6 9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 b3 0-0 11 ♗b2 ♗a7 (11...♗g4 is playable as well) 12 ♖c1 ♕d6 leads to a typical position with an isolated d-pawn, in which practice shows Black has nothing to fear. On the whole, the next few moves of the game serve mainly to determine the question who will be the one left with the isolani.

6 cxd5 exd5

One thing has been clarified: it's not going to be White. This could occur after 6...♘xd5 7 ♗d3 ♗e7 8 0-0 cxd4 (the more flexible 8...0-0!? once again demonstrates the rich transpositional possibilities hidden in the position; after 9 a3 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 b6 11 ♗b2 ♗b7 we are suddenly in the Petrosian Queen's Indian!) 9 exd4 0-0. In this position, which often arises also via the Panov Attack, White's compensation for the weakness on d4 has the usual form: good piece-play and a space advantage.

7 ♗b5

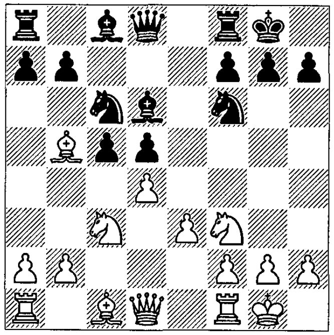
Karpov's bishop sortie is also played against the Panov; here it leads to a kind of Nimzo-Indian with reversed colours.

7 ... ♗d6

8 0-0

Can White use his extra tempo to achieve something concrete? Hardly; the pseudo-active 8 ♘e5?! ♕c7 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 ♗e2 ♗d6 (11...♕e5!?) 12 h3 ♕e7 13 b3 0-0 14 ♗b2 ♗f5 is not worth the effort, as Black then had a very pleasant position in Ribli-Adorjan, Budapest IZ playoff (1) 1979.

8 ... 0-0 *(D)*



9 h3!?

This is a rare move, although it had previously been played even by Karpov himself. White prevents the unpleasant ...♗g4 pin and leaves it to Black to decide the character of the fight. The main problem with the more natural 9 dxc5 ♗xc5 10 b3 (10 a3!? is perhaps more promising) is that 10...♗g4 11 ♗b2 a6 12 ♗xc6 (after 12 ♗e2?! the alert reader will notice Black is a tempo up compared with the note to move 5) 12...bxc6 doesn't cause Black too many worries. Compared with similar lines in the Nimzo-Indian (with colours reversed) here White has already committed his knight to c3 instead of d2, so he will be practically forced to allow the weakening of his kingside. Then 13 ♖c1 ♗d6 14 ♘e2 ♗xf3 15 gxf3 ♖c8 16 ♔h1 ♖e8 17 ♖g1 g6 18 ♕d2 ♗f8 19 b4 a5 20 a3 axb4 21 axb4 ♗g7 22 ♖c2 ♕d7 23 ♖gc1 ♘h5 24 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 25 ♘d4 ♕h3 26 ♕d1 ♘f5 gave Black sufficient counterplay in Ashley-de Firmian, New York (CITS) 1996.

9 ... cxd4

After successfully navigating the numerous transpositions mentioned above, Black plays a somewhat inferior move. It's better not to resolve the central tension yet; for example, 9...a6 (9...♗f5!?) 10 ♗xc6 bxc6 11 b3 ♖e8 12 dxc5 ♗xc5 13 ♗b2 ♕d6 14 ♘a4 ♗a7 15 ♗d4 ♘e4 16 ♗xa7 ♖xa7 17 ♘d2 ♘xd2 18 ♕xd2 ♕g6 19 ♔h2 ♕d6+ 20 ♔h1 ♕h6 led to a repetition in Kharlov-Ulybin, Russian Ch (Elista) 1996. This game shows one of the disadvantages of 9 h3!? – White's kingside can become distinctly vulnerable.

10 exd4

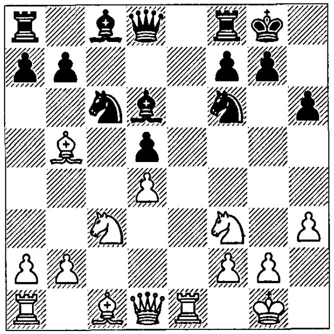
10 ♘xd4?! doesn't fit with White's previous move; after 10...♗c7! Black has the unpleasant threat ...♕d6.

10 ... h6

This is a logical move, which prevents ♗g5, but is it really necessary? Although sooner or later Black will probably need to play ...h6, at this point 10...♕b6!? certainly at least deserves attention: 11 ♗e3 (11 ♗g5 is countered by 11...♘e4; 11 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 12 ♘e5 ♕b6 13 ♗g5 ♕xb2 14 ♕f3 ♗xe5 15 dxe5 ♘e4 is about equal; the same goes for 11 ♖e1 h6 12 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 13 ♘e5 ♕b6) 11...♘e7!? (11...♘e4 12 ♗d3 is worse for Black) 12 ♕b3 h6 (12...a6 13 ♗c4! or 12...♘f5 13 ♘a4 ♕d8 14 ♗g5 is rather less pleasant) and Black should be able to neutralize White's minimal edge.

11 ♖e1 *(D)*

The opening has resulted in a symmetrical position. White has a tiny edge; first and foremost due to the extra tempo, Black's d5-pawn is more sensitive than its counterpart on d4, and this allows White to place his pieces more actively. Although objectively this is not too much, it's the type of position in which Karpov excels.



11 ... ♗d7?!

From this moment on, White firmly grabs the initiative. Other moves tried in practice also have their drawbacks:

1) 11...♗f5 12 ♘e5 ♖c8 13 ♗f4 ♘b4 14 ♖c1 ♘e4 15 ♕f3 ♘xc3 (15...♕b6 16 ♗xh6 ♕xd4 17 ♘d7! is also dangerous for Black) 16 ♖xc3 ♘xa2? 17 ♘xf7! and Black's position falls apart, Gulko-Browne, USA Ch (Denver) 1998.

2) 11...♕c7 12 ♗e3 ♗d7 13 ♖c1 a6 14 ♗d3 ♖fe8 15 a3 ♖ac8 16 b4 ♗f4 17 ♗xf4 ♖xe1+ 18 ♕xe1 ♕xf4 19 ♘e2 ♕d6 20 ♕d2 ♘e7 21 ♘g3 ♖xc1+ 22 ♕xc1 ♘c6 23 ♕c5 ♕b8 24 ♘e2 b6 25 ♕c3 and White's advantage has grown, Karpov-Leko, Dortmund 1994.

Therefore Black should look for alternatives such as:

3) 11...♖e8 12 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 13 ♕b3 ♗e6 and now 14 ♘e5? fails to 14...♘xd4.

4) Or 11...♕b6!?, which we have already mentioned in the note to Black's 10th move.

After these moves Black is closer to full equality.

12 ♘e5 ♖c8

12...♖e8 13 ♗f4 creates the unpleasant threat of ♘xf7!.

13 a3

Another typical Karpovian move. White delays the development of his c1-bishop, as it's still not clear where it will be most effectively posted. This little move deprives Black's pieces of the b4-square, and later White can consider building a battery on the b1-h7 diagonal. 13 ♗f4 is less effective in view of the response 13...♗b4.

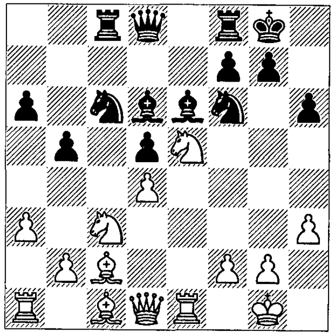
13 ... a6

14 ♗a4 b5?!

14...♘e7 also doesn't solve Black's problems since after 15 ♗b3!? the centralized knight has a paralysing effect. Morović should have tried to undermine its outpost by 14...♕c7 or 14...♖e8, as now he doesn't get the chance.

15 ♗b3! ♗e6

16 ♗c2! *(D)*



Karpov is a past master of short but effective moves. First by hitting d5 he forced Black to close the e-file, thus safeguarding the e5-knight, and now he avoids ...♘a5 and prepares his own attack.

16 ... ♕b6

This is not an ideal square for the queen, but it's already not easy to face White's growing pressure:

1) After 16...♘e7 (with the idea ...♗f5), 17 ♕f3 threatens ♗xh6.

2) 16...b4 17 axb4 ♘xb4 18 ♗b1 is also better for White.

3) The consistent 16...♘a5 17 ♕d3 ♘c4 18 b3 ♘b6! (18...♘xa3?! is tempting, but after 19 ♗xa3 b4 20 ♘xd5! ♗xd5 21 ♗b2 the a6-pawn is attacked and White threatens ♘g4 as well) is more to the point, as Black gets some counterplay on the c-file.

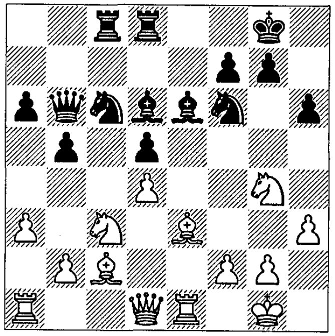
4) Another useful move deserving attention is 16...♖e8!?.

17 ♗e3 ♖fd8

18 ♘g4! *(D)*

Black's intention ...♗xe5 and ...d4 finally forces White to retreat his proud knight. However, this retreat creates a whole new set of problems for Black.

18 ... ♗xg4?!



Black concedes the light squares and the bishop-pair, a decision one has to question.

1) 18...♘d7?! is risky, as it deserts Black's king:

1a) 19 ♗xh6 ♕xd4!? (19...gxh6? 20 ♖xe6 fxe6 21 ♘xh6+ ♔g7 22 ♕g4+! leads to mate) 20 ♗g5 ♕xd1 21 ♖axd1 ♖e8 is not so bad for Black, since the d5-pawn is poisoned due to a back-rank mate.

1b) Much more dangerous is 19 ♘xh6+! gxh6 20 ♕h5, when the absence of major pieces in the defence of the kingside makes itself felt.

Black should choose between the following two moves:

2) 18...♗e7 19 ♕d3 ♗xg4 20 hxg4 b4 21 ♘a4 ♕b5 22 ♕d1 is similar to the game continuation. Black has somewhat more counterplay here, but White's position nevertheless remains preferable.

3) 18...♘xg4!? 19 hxg4, with ideas like ♕f3 or ♗f5, appears very dangerous. Black's best is 19...♗e7! (19...♘e7 20 g5 hxg5 21 ♗xg5) 20 ♕d3 g6 21 f3 ♗f6 22 ♘e2 (or 22 ♖ad1). After safeguarding d4, White plans to turn his attention to Black's shaky kingside with ♘e2-f4, and possibly ♔f2 and ♖h1. However, all this costs time and Black is not devoid of counterchances.

19 hxg4 ♗b8?

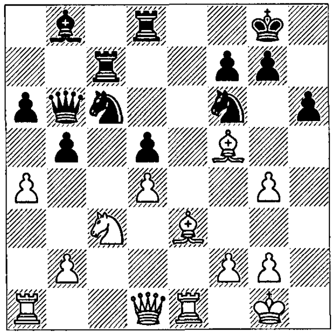
This is definitely a mistake, after which Black's forces lose their coordination and White considerably increases his pressure. 19...♖e8! is much better, although after 20 g3!? (20 ♕d3 ♖cd8! 21 ♘xd5 ♗h2+! 22 ♔xh2 ♖xd5 23 ♗b3 ♘e5! leads White nowhere) White has an advantage.

20 ♗f5

Karpov uses the opportunity to displace Black's pieces. He isn't tempted by the seemingly natural 20 ♕d3?!, which would give his opponent tactical chances: 20...b4 21 ♘a4 ♕c7 22 g3 ♘xd4!.

20 ... ♖c7

21 a4! *(D)*



The chessboard has two flanks and White dominates on both. If Black doesn't want to defend a weakness on a6 or b5, his next move is forced.

21 ... b4

22 a5!

This pawn sacrifice is a logical follow-up to the previous move, as it activates the remainder of White's army.

22 ... ♘xa5

After 22...♕b7 23 ♘a4 ♗a7 24 ♘c5 ♗xc5 25 dxc5 d4 26 ♗f4 ♖e7 27 ♕f3 ♖d5 28 ♗d6 the bishops are very powerful.

23 ♘a4 ♕d6

23...♕b5 24 g5! (24 ♘c5 is weaker due to 24...♘c4) 24...hxg5 25 ♗xg5 ♖c6 26 ♘c5 gives White a strong attack; Black's queen is misplaced.

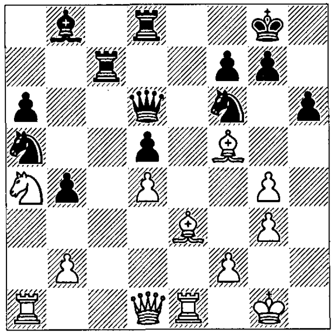
24 g3 *(D)*

Besides the direct threat of ♗f4, this move is connected with other ideas, as we will see later.

24 ... ♖a7

Instead of this ugly and passive move Black could have tried 24...♖e7!? 25 ♘c5 (25 ♗f4 ♖xe1+ 26 ♕xe1 ♕c6 only helps Black), and now:

1) 25...♗c7?! 26 ♗f4 ♖xe1+ 27 ♕xe1 ♕b6 28 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 29 ♘xa6 ♕b6 30 ♕xb4 ♕xa6



(30...♕xb4 31 ♘xb4 ♘b3 32 ♘c6 and the passed b-pawn will decide) 31 ♕xa5 ♕xa5 32 ♖xa5 g6 33 ♗d3 ♘xg4 34 b4 with great winning chances for White.

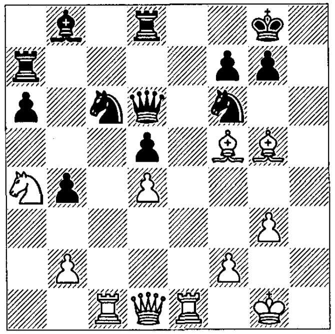
2) 25...♕b6 26 g5! (26 b3 ♖de8! is unclear) 26...hxg5 27 ♗xg5 ♖xe1+ 28 ♕xe1 and the problems persist. Black's pieces are passive and he might easily lose both his queenside pawns.

25 g5 hxg5

26 ♗xg5 ♘c6

26...♖e8? is bad in view of 27 ♗xf6 ♖xe1+ 28 ♕xe1 gxf6 29 ♘c5, while after 26...g6 27 ♘c5 (27 ♗h3!?) 27...gxf5 (27...♘c6 28 ♗xg6!) 28 ♖xa5 White has a huge advantage. Even the seemingly logical 26...♘c4 27 b3 ♘b6 28 ♘c5 doesn't help Black, as now the most natural move, 28...a5 (28...♘c8 is also bad, due to 29 ♗f4 ♕b6 30 ♘a4! and ♗g5), runs into the tactical 29 ♖xa5!, when after 29...♖xa5 30 ♘b7 ♕f8 31 ♗xf6 gxf6 32 ♘xd8 White's attack breaks through.

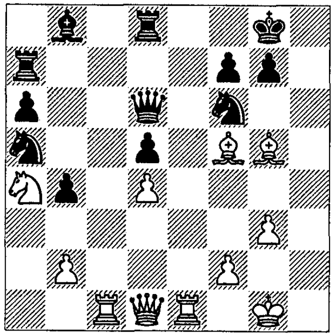
27 ♖c1! *(D)*



27 ... ♘a5 *(D)*

A sad but forced return. After 27...♖e7, 28 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 29 ♗f4 traps the black queen, while after 27...b3 28 ♗f4 ♕b4 29 ♖xc6 ♗xf4 30 gxf4 ♕xa4 31 ♖xf6! gxf6 32 ♕h5 Black gets mated.

W



28 ♖c5 ♘c4
29 b3 ♘a3
30 ♔g2!

White is patient; after 30 ♕f3?! ♘b5 Black could breathe a sigh of relief.

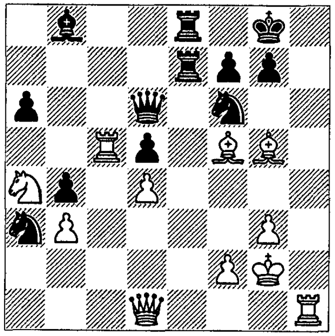
30 ... ♖e7

Now Black loses by force, but his defences are too strained even after 30...♘b5 31 ♖h1 g6 (31...♖e8 is insufficient, as after 32 ♖h4 Black can't meet ♕h1) 32 ♖h6 ♔g7 33 ♕h1 ♖e8 (33...♘xd4 loses to 34 ♕h4! ♘xf5 35 ♗xf6+) 34 ♕h4 ♘h5 35 ♖xh5 gxh5 36 ♕xh5 ♖h8 37 ♕g4 and the attack breaks through.

31 ♖h1 ♖de8 *(D)*

It's too late for 31...g6 32 ♗f4 or 31...♖a7 32 ♖h4 g6 33 ♕h1 ♔g7 34 ♗h6+ ♔g8 35 ♗f4.

W



32 ♖h8+! ♔xh8
33 ♕h1+ ♔g8
34 ♗xf6

There is no defence against ♕h7+; the rest is just agony.

34 ... ♕xg3+
35 fxg3 ♖e2+
36 ♔h3 gxf6
37 ♔g4 1-0

Summary

In this game White chose a modest approach to the opening, which is becoming increasingly rare nowadays, when aggressive lines are being researched to an earlier unimaginable depth with computer support. With 4 e3, Karpov signified his readiness to shift the emphasis of the fight for an advantage to the early middlegame. To adopt such a method, the chosen system must have several characteristics. First of all is the absence of concrete and forcing methods leading to sterile positions. Although in the phase between moves 9 and 15 Black is very close to complete equality, it's not easy to pinpoint how exactly he should achieve it even in analysis, let alone in a practical game. This brings us to the second consideration – good form and confidence in his chess understanding, manoeuvring abilities and experience led Karpov to believe he could outplay his opponent in such a situation, without risking some unpleasant surprises in sharp topical lines. And last, but not least, all the numerous possible transpositions complicate orientation, especially for the defending side.

The critical moment in my opinion came after 18 ♘g4. Morović's 18...♗xg4?! was a very permanent concession; after all, the unopposed light-squared bishop later played a major role in the decisive attack. However dangerous the alternative 18...♘xg4 seems, the h6-pawn is less of a weakness than the gaping b1-h7 diagonal, while Black's play on the c-file can also be quite unpleasant for White. 19...♗b8? was only a confirmation of the fact that in unpleasant positions it's more difficult to find the right moves. Karpov's play from move 20 onwards was a model of precision and purposefulness. He gradually intensified the pressure (22 a5!, 25 g5) and this led to a decisive kingside attack.

Game 4

Michael Adams – Simen Agdestein

Match (game 2), Oslo 1994

Alekhine Defence [B02]

1 e4 ♘f6
2 ♘c3 d5
3 e5 ♘e4

Agdestein didn't venture the Alekhine to get into a French after 3...♘fd7 4 d4 c5 5 f4 e6 6 ♘f3. 3...d4 is mainly considered as an easy equalizer, but caution is required after Hector's favourite 4 exf6 dxc3 5 fxg7 cxd2+ 6 ♗xd2 ♗xg7 7 ♕f3!?.

4 ♕f3

'Normal' continuations such as 4 ♘f3 ♗g4 don't pose Black any problems at all, so something out of the ordinary is required. More popular and better than White's choice is 4 ♘ce2!?, which promises chances for an advantage:

1) 4...d4?! 5 c3 ♘c6 is best met by 6 ♘f3!, when Black can't maintain his central outpost advantageously, since the consistent 6...♗g4? loses practically by force to 7 ♘exd4! ♘xe5 (7...♘xd4 8 ♕a4+) 8 ♕e2 ♕d5 9 ♘b5! 0-0-0 10 c4 ♕e6 11 d4!.

2) After 4...♘c5 5 d4 ♘e6 6 f4 g6 7 ♘f3 c5 8 c3 ♘c6 9 g3 h5 Black's position is solid, but rather passive; White's space advantage gives him a pleasant edge. Moreover, by spurning 3...♘fd7 Agdestein has already indicated that he is not too interested in such pawn-structures.

3) That leaves the double-edged 4...f6!?. Although the straightforward 5 d3 ♘g5 6 ♗xg5 fxg5 7 h4! g4 8 d4 (or 8 ♘f4) is quite dangerous for Black, he is not without counterchances.

4 ... ♘xc3

4...♘c6 is weaker because of 5 ♗b5! (5 ♘xe4 ♘d4 6 ♕c3 dxe4 7 ♘e2 ♘c6!? is unconvincing for White).

5 dxc3 c6

Although six moves later Black will play ...c5, this solid reinforcement of the centre can hardly be criticized. 5...c5 6 ♗e3!? (6 ♗b5+ ♘c6 7 c4 e6 gets White nowhere) more or less forces Black to shut in his c8-bishop with 6...e6, something he would like to avoid. 5...g6 6 ♗d3 ♗g7 7 ♕e2 c5!? is possibly a better version of the line above.

6 ♗f4?!

Was it really necessary to allow Black to develop his bishop comfortably? After 6 c4 ♗e6!? (Black should avoid the greedy 6...dxc4?! 7 ♗xc4 ♕a5+ 8 ♗d2 ♕xe5+ 9 ♘e2, when White has a huge lead in development) the position is about equal. Adams didn't like 6 ♗d3 ♘d7! 7 e6 (otherwise Black achieves his aim with ...♘c5 and ...♗f5) 7...♘e5 8 exf7+ ♘xf7 9 c4 e5 10 cxd5 cxd5 with a mobile pawn-centre, something Black rarely gets in the Alekhine. 6 ♗d2 g6 can also hardly promise White any advantage.

6 ... ♗f5
7 0-0-0

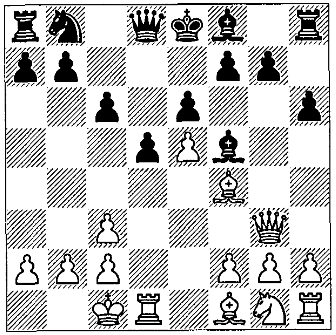
The more circumspect (and cowardly!) 7 ♗d3!? ♗xd3 8 cxd3 was still sufficient for approximate equality, but neither of the players was in a peaceful mood on that day and the tension rises quickly.

7 ... e6

Already the contours of Black's plan can be seen: a ruthless pawn advance against White's king, while his own king is relatively safe behind the central pawn-chain. Therefore White must act.

8 ♕g3 h6 *(D)*

W



The bishop is vital for the intended attack, so Black frees h7 in case of ♘f3-h4.

9 h4 ♕a5
10 ♔b1 b5
11 ♘f3 c5

11...b4?! 12 c4 doesn't fit Black's plans; opening the centre is not in his interest.

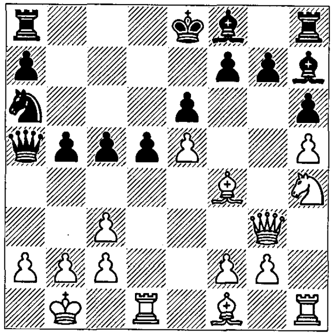
12 h5 ♘a6

After 12...b4?!, 13 c4 ♘c6 14 ♘h4! (the careless 14 cxd5 b3 15 axb3 ♘b4 is very dangerous for White), possibly followed by ♗d3, parries the direct threats and wakes Black up to the fact that a lot of his pieces are undeveloped. However, 12...♘c6!? certainly deserved attention. After 13 ♘h4 ♗h7 it's still too early to say where the knight is best placed, but from c6 it also attacks e5 and so White couldn't continue as in the game.

13 ♘h4 ♗h7 *(D)*

Agdestein suggested the finesse 13...♗e4!? afterwards, as the interpolation of 14 f3 ♗h7 closes White's third rank and favours Black.

W



14 ♕g4!

The half-hearted 14 ♗d3 ♗xd3 15 cxd3 (15 ♕xd3 c4 and ...b4 is even worse for White) 15...c4! can hardly slow down Black's attack.

14 ... b4
15 ♗d2

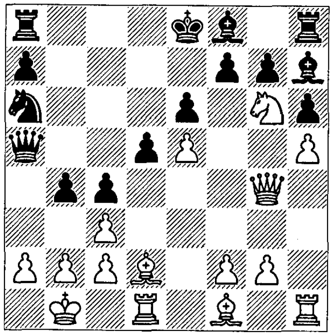
A short look at the alternatives is sufficient to show that this is the only reasonable move: 15 c4? b3! 16 axb3 ♘b4 17 ♘g6 0-0-0!? is disgusting for White; the same goes for 15 ♘g6? bxc3 16 ♗xa6 (16 ♘xh8 ♘b4 gives Black a winning attack) 16...♕xa6 17 ♘xh8 ♖b8 18 b3 (18 ♗c1 ♖xb2+ 19 ♗xb2 ♕b5) 18...♕a3 19 ♗c1 ♖xb3+ 20 axb3 ♕xb3+ 21 ♔a1 ♗xc2 and White gets mated.

15 ... c4!

Consistent and strong. Agdestein knows no fear and rightly spurns the approximately equal endgame after 15...bxc3?! 16 ♗xc3 ♘b4 17 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 18 ♕xb4 cxb4 19 ♗d3.

16 ♘g6! *(D)*

B



This spectacular kamikaze jump is practically forced by the threat of ...b3 and creates a special kind of stalemate on the kingside: although the knight can't move, Black can't take it either. For the moment the lines are simple: 16...fxg6? 17 ♕xe6+ ♔d8 (17...♗e7 18 hxg6 ♗g8 19 ♕c6+) 18 ♗g5+! with a decisive attack.

16 ... ♖b8

Logical. 16...bxc3?! 17 ♗xc3 ♗b4 is artificial:

1) The adventurous 18 ♘xh8?! is possible, but not White's best. After 18...♗xc3 19 ♕xg7 ♕b4 20 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 21 ♖xd5+! exd5 22 ♕xd5+ ♔e7 23 ♕d6+ ♕xd6 24 exd6+ ♔d7! 25 bxc3 (25 ♘f7? ♖b8) 25...♖xh8 26 ♗xc4 ♘c5 White's pawns are numerous, but very weak and Black can't be worse in this endgame.

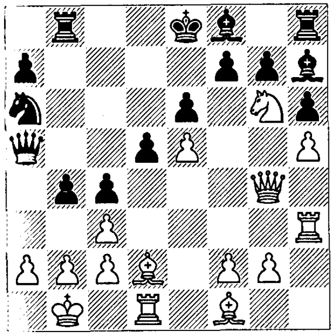
2) 18 ♗xb4 ♘xb4 (after 18...♕xb4 19 ♘xh8 ♖b8 20 ♕d4 ♘c5 21 ♖h3! White beats off the attack) 19 a3 ♖b8 20 axb4 ♕xb4 (20...♖xb4!?) 21 b3 cxb3 (21...♕a3 22 ♗xc4 dxc4 23 ♕xc4 and the counterattack triumphs) 22 ♕xb4 ♖xb4 23 ♗d3! fxg6 24 hxg6. Now 24...♗g8 is forced, but leaves Black, with his incarcerated pieces, in a hopeless predicament. We will see some of this motif later on.

17 ♖h3 *(D)*

17 ♘xh8? b3 or 17 cxb4? ♗xb4 is suicide.

Now we have arrived at the culmination of the game. Black's attacking set-up is impressive, but he is starting to feel the lack of reserves. If he could make a few moves in a row (...♗e7, ...♔d7 and ...♖fc8) the game would be over. Moreover, the resources of White's pieces shouldn't be underestimated; they are like a coiled spring.

B



17 ... ♗e7?!

This is inaccurate, but an absolutely clear-cut solution probably doesn't exist. Black has numerous other moves; let's first examine those that are even worse than the text-move:

1) 17...♔d7? 18 ♗xc4 dxc4? 19 cxb4 ♕a4 20 ♖a3 followed by ♘xh8 turns the tables.

2) 17...d4? is too beautiful to be true, as White best proves by 18 cxb4! ♗xb4 19 ♗xb4 ♘xb4 (19...♕xb4 20 ♕xd4) 20 ♗xc4.

3) 17...bxc3 18 ♗xc3 ♗b4 also won't break through so easily, because after 19 ♗d4! (19 ♗xb4? is bad due to 19...♕xb4 20 b3 ♕a3) Black's pieces get in each other's way.

4) After 17...♕b6!? Black covers e6 and prepares to capture the knight, as the rook still remains taboo. Then 18 ♗c1!? seems best (18 ♘xh8? b3 19 ♔a1 ♕a5 mates; 18 ♗e3 ♗c5 is not ideal either), when after 18...fxg6 19 hxg6 ♗g8 Black has an extra piece but the result of the game depends on whether the h8-rook and g8-bishop will be able to enter the fray.

5) 17...♕a4!? is interesting, but here White seems to be able to escape with a draw:

5a) 18 ♗xc4?! dxc4 19 ♕xc4 and then:

5a1) 19...fxg6? 20 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 21 ♗g5!! hxg5 22 hxg6 and suddenly Black, with three extra pieces, is lost! This only proves the words about the pent-up energy of White's forces.

5a2) 19...♖g8?! is somewhat better, but also very risky. After 20 cxb4 ♕b5 (20...♗xb4? 21 ♖d3! gives White a winning attack) 21 ♕xb5+ (21 ♕g4!?) 21...♖xb5 22 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 23 ♖a3 ♘xb4 24 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 25 ♖xa7 White has at least a perpetual and probably even more than that.

5a3) However, all this remains mainly academic, as after 19...♘c5! 20 b3 bxc3 21 ♕xa4+ ♘xa4 22 ♘xh8 cxd2 23 ♖xd2 ♗b4 Black is close to winning, as White can hardly save his knight.

5b) 18 b3! bxc3 and here:

5b1) Not 19 ♗xc3? ♘c5! 20 ♘xh8, when Black has the pleasant choice between two winning continuations: 20...♗xc2+ and 20...♘xb3!.

5b2) 19 ♖xc3 (the correct move; White seriously intends to play ♗xc4) 19...♗b4!? 20 bxa4 (20 ♘xh8? loses on the spot to 20...♗xc3 21 ♗xc3 ♖xb3+, while 20 ♖g3 ♗xd2 21 ♖xd2 ♕a5 gives Black a strong attack) 20...♗xc3+ leads to a perpetual.

6) This brings us to the most direct method, 17...b3! 18 cxb3 cxb3 19 axb3 *(D)* (19 a4? is out of the question due to 19...♘c5), and now:

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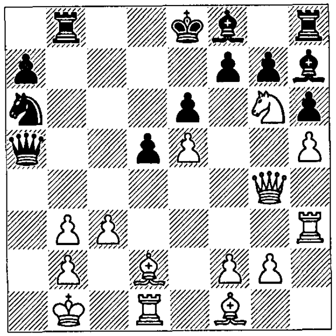


6a) After 19...♘c5 20 b4 (20 c4?! ♕b6 21 b4 ♘e4 22 ♗e1 ♘g5! is quite convincing for Black; he could have taken the g6-knight earlier, but now he is ready to play ...fxg6 in an ideal situation) 20...♕a4 the position still remains treacherous for White, but at least after, e.g., 21 ♗d3!? the knight doesn't land on e4.

6b) My personal favourite is the straightforward 19...♖xb3!? 20 c4 (there is hardly anything else; Black was threatening to pile up against b2 with ...♗a3 and ...♘c5-a4, etc.) 20...♘b4 (20...♕b6? 21 ♖xb3 ♕xb3 22 cxd5 favours White) 21 ♗xb4 (21 ♖xb3? ♕a2+ 22

♔c1 ♕a1#) 21...♖xb4 (21...♕xb4 22 ♖xb3 ♕xb3 23 cxd5 ♗a3 24 ♖d2 is again insufficient; Black must keep his active pieces on the board) 22 ♗d3!. Now there is no immediate tactical win and White threatens to start his own powerplay, as the h8-rook is still completely offside. Therefore action is required:

6b1) If Black feels he has had enough, he can force a perpetual with 22...♖xb2+ 23 ♔xb2 ♕a3+ (23...♗a3+? 24 ♔c2) 24 ♔c2 (24 ♔b1 ♕b3+ 25 ♔c1 ♕c3+) 24...♕a2+ 25 ♔c3 ♕a5+.

6b2) 22...♕b6 is more ambitious. 23 ♖d2 and now Black has to be careful about transpositions:

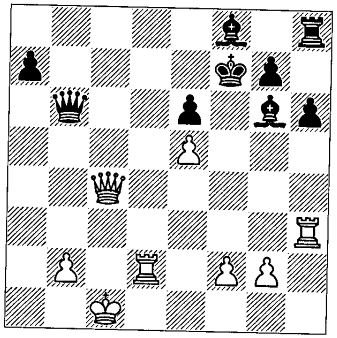
6b21) 23...fxg6?! 24 hxg6 and then:

6b211) 24...dxc4? allows the deadly 25 gxh7! c3 (25...cxd3 loses to 26 ♕g6+ ♔e7 27 ♖f3) 26 ♗b5+! ♖xb5 27 ♕g6+ ♔e7 28 ♖d6 ♖xb2+ 29 ♔c1 ♕b3 30 ♖f3 and to avoid mate Black must sacrifice a whole rook, which leads to a lost endgame.

6b212) 24...♗g8 leads to an unclear situation of a type we have already discussed: Black's kingside is so passive that the extra piece doesn't mean that much. For Black coping with a similar problem see also Shirov-Nisipeanu, Las Vegas FIDE KO 1999 (Game 45).

6b22) The right way is 23...dxc4! 24 ♗xc4 fxg6 25 hxg6 ♖xc4 26 ♕xc4 ♗xg6+ 27 ♔c1 ♔f7!? *(D)*.

W



Black's h7-bishop has risen phoenix-like from the ashes and there is no immediate disaster in sight. After, for example, 28 ♖b3 ♕a5! 29 ♖d7+ ♔g8 30 ♕xe6+ ♔h7, the chances are all on Black's side.

Although this overview hardly exhausts the position, it shows quite well the main problems both sides are battling with.

18 ♗xc4!

When one's life is at stake, one has to be generous. Adams energetically gets back into the game, and is not interested in the helpmate after 18 cxb4 ♗xb4 19 ♖a3?? ♕xa3! 20 bxa3 ♗xd2+.

18 ... dxc4

This is best. Other moves:

1) 18...fxg6 is possible, but risky. 19 ♕xe6 and here:

1a) 19...dxc4? 20 ♕c6+ ♔f7 21 ♖f3+ ♗f6 22 ♖xf6+! gxf6 23 ♕d7+ ♔g8 24 ♕e6+ leads to mate.

1b) 19...♘c7? 20 ♕c6+ ♔d8 (20...♔f8 also loses, to 21 ♖f3+ ♔g8 22 cxb4) 21 e6 ♘xe6 22 ♗xh6 gives White a decisive attack.

1c) The only defence is 19...♕b6! 20 ♕xd5 ♗g8 21 e6 (less incisive is 21 ♕e4?! ♘c5 22 ♕e2 bxc3 23 ♗xc3 ♘a4) 21...♘c5 22 cxb4! ♗xe6 (22...♘xe6 23 ♕e5 is similar) 23 ♕e5. White already has three pawns for the knight, while Black's king is still in the middle and it's not easy for him to untangle the jumbled pieces in the centre. For example, 23...♗f6 24 ♕e2 0-0? 25 b3 ♗xc4 26 ♕xc4+ ♘e6 27 ♗e3 ♖fd8 28 ♖hh1.

2) Not much better is 18...♗xg6 19 hxg6! (19 ♗xa6? ♗f5 20 ♕xg7 ♔d7, with the point that 21 g4? ♖h7 traps the white queen, favours Black) 19...dxc4 20 gxf7+ ♔f8 (after 20...♔xf7?, 21 ♖f3+ wins at least a piece) 21 ♖xh6! (the most energetic continuation; 21 ♕xe6 b3! gives Black counterplay) 21...♖xh6 22 ♗xh6 ♕xe5 23 ♗f4 ♕e4 24 f3 ♕e2 25 ♖h1 with a strong attack for White; e.g., 25...♖d8 26 ♖h8+ ♔xf7 27 ♕h5+ g6 28 ♕h7+ ♔f6 29 ♕h4+ ♔f7 30 ♖h7+ ♔g8 31 ♖g7+! and Black's pieces fall with check.

19 ♕xc4 *(D)*

19 ... ♕c5?

Agdestein doesn't want to reconcile himself to the necessary but psychologically difficult transition from a direct attack to tough defence. His reaction bears traces of panic; after this mistake Black's game is probably beyond saving.

White's threats were ♕c6+ and ♘xh8. After 19...fxg6? White wins by 20 ♕c6+ ♔f7 21 ♖f3+, while 19...♕a4? 20 b3 doesn't help either. Black had to go in for 19...♗xg6 20 ♕c6+ (20 hxg6?! 0-0 is less convincing for White) 20...♔f8 21 hxg6, when an unbiased look at the position shows us that Black's attack is history and his pieces lack coordination. White has strong pressure and will probably win at least another pawn. Although the advantage has changed hands, Black can still resist with 21...♕b5:

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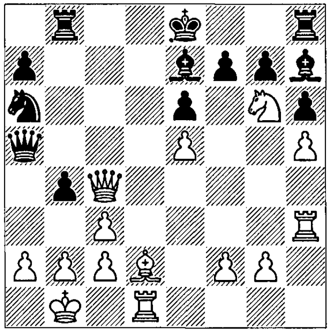

1) Adams's suggestion 22 ♕xb5 ♖xb5 23 ♖f3 ♖xe5!? (23...f5 24 cxb4 leaves the h8-rook locked in) 24 ♖xf7+ ♔e8 25 ♖xg7 ♖e2 gives Black realistic drawing chances.

2) It is more tempting to continue the attack with 22 ♕f3:

2a) 22...♕e8 is bad due to 23 gxf7, as after 23...♕xf7? 24 ♕e2 the double attack wins the knight.

2b) 22...f6 23 ♗xh6!? (23 exf6 ♗xf6 24 ♗xh6 ♕f5 is roughly equal) 23...bxc3 (after 23...♖xh6 24 ♖xh6 gxh6 25 exf6 ♗d8? 26 ♕f4! White wins immediately) 24 ♗c1 ♖g8 25 ♕xc3 and White is better.

2c) White has a dangerous attack even after 22...f5 23 g4 ♔e8!?, although here, just as in line '2b', the issue remains open.

20 ♕xc5 ♘xc5
21 ♘xh8 ♘e4
22 ♗e1 bxc3
23 b3 *(D)*
23 ... ♗b4?!

After a series of forced moves Black misses his best practical chance to keep the outcome open. 23...♗g5 24 f4 ♗xf4 25 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 26 ♖f3 is hopeless, but the only chance was 23...♗f5!?. White has several possible replies:

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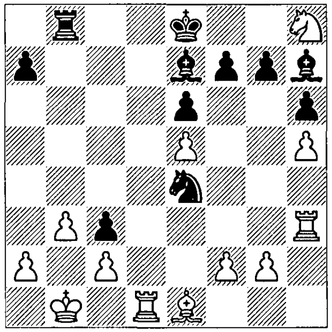


1) The most natural 24 ♖f3?! ♗g4 25 ♘xf7 ♗xh5! gives White an unsatisfactory choice:

1a) 26 ♘d6+ ♘xd6 27 exd6 ♗xf3 28 gxf3 ♗f6 29 ♖d3 ♖d8!? 30 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 31 ♖xc3 ♖xd6 leads to an endgame in which the h-pawn compensates for the missing material. The exchange of rooks 32 ♖c8+ ♔e7 33 ♖c7+ ♖d7 34 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 35 ♔c1 h5 36 ♔d2 e5 37 ♔e2 g5 leads only to a draw, as Black's pawns are invincible.

1b) 26 ♖d4 ♗xf3 27 gxf3 ♔xf7 (27...♗c5? loses to 28 ♖d3 ♘d2+ 29 ♗xd2 cxd2 30 ♘d6+ ♔e7 31 ♖xd2 ♖d8 32 ♔c1 ♗xd6 33 exd6+ ♖xd6 34 ♖xd6 ♔xd6 35 f4!, when compared with '1a' the h-pawn only gets to h5) 28 fxe4 h5 and again the outside passed pawn seriously complicates matters.

2) 24 ♖e3 ♗g5 25 ♖f3 is an attempt to lure the bishop to an exposed square.

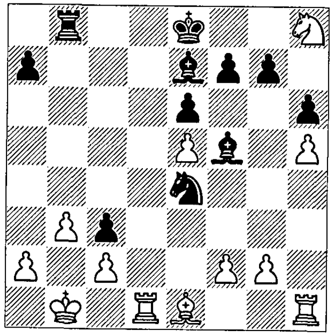
2a) The point is clear after 25...♗g4 26 ♘xf7 ♗xh5 27 ♘xg5 ♘xg5 28 ♖fd3!, when White avoids the disruption of his pawns and wins the ensuing endgame.

2b) Also 25...♖b7 26 ♖fd3!? (26 ♖d4 ♗d2!) 26...♘d2+ 27 ♗xd2 cxd2 28 ♖3xd2 ♗xd2 29 ♖xd2 ♔e7 30 ♖d4 ♖b8 31 ♖a4 is far from ideal for Black, because White's knight is still alive and kicking.

2c) However, 25...♗d2! 26 ♖xf5 exf5 27 f3 ♗xe1 28 fxe4 ♗d2 29 exf5 ♔e7 captures the poor beast.

3) It takes quite some time to realize that the paradoxical 24 ♖h1! *(D)* is best.

White doesn't expose his rook to enemy attacks, while it also sometimes proves useful on the back rank. After all, White is an exchange and pawn up and if he manages, for example, to



trade his knight for the f7- and c3-pawns, he would be close to winning. Now:

3a) 24...♗c5 25 f3 ♘f2 26 ♗xf2 ♗xf2 27 g4 ♗h7 28 ♖d6 ♔e7 29 ♖hd1 is hopeless for Black.

3b) 24...♗g5 25 ♖d4 ♔e7 (25...♘d2+ loses to 26 ♗xd2 ♗xd2 27 ♖c4) and now the most clear-cut is 26 g4 ♗xg4 27 ♘xf7! (27 ♖xe4?! ♗f3 and 27 f4 ♖xh8 28 fxg5 hxg5! leave White with more technical problems) 27...♔xf7 28 f3 and White remains an exchange up.

3c) 24...♗b4 25 ♖d4 a5!? (25...♔e7 fails to 26 f3 ♘d2+ 27 ♗xd2 cxd2 28 g4 ♗h7 29 ♖f4!) is arguably the best chance:

3c1) 26 f3 ♘d2+ 27 ♗xd2 cxd2 28 g4 ♗h7 29 ♖c4 ♖b5 30 f4 ♖c5! is still unclear.

3c2) 26 g4 ♗h7 27 f3 ♘d2+ (27...♘g5 28 ♖f1 ♔e7 29 ♗h4!) 28 ♗xd2 cxd2 29 ♔b2 ♖c8 30 c4 ♔e7 31 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 32 a3 should win in the long run.

24 ♖f3 ♘d2+

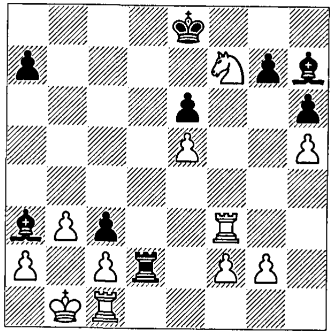
This try has a ring of despair to it. However, Black can't even capture White's knight advantageously: after 24...♗f5 25 ♘xf7!? ♔xf7 26 g4 ♘g5 27 ♖f4 ♘h3 28 ♖c4 ♗h7 29 ♖d7+ White wins easily. The same goes for 24...♘g5 25 ♖f4 ♔e7 26 ♖c4.

25 ♗xd2 ♖d8

Or 25...cxd2 26 ♔b2 (not 26 ♘xf7? ♖c8) 26...♗f5 27 c3, when White's material advantage decides.

26 ♘xf7 ♖xd2
27 ♖c1 ♗a3 *(D)*

Although now Black threatens mate in three with 28...♗xc2+!, it's White's move and by returning the extra exchange he liquidates into a technically won endgame.



28 ♘d6+ ♔d7
29 ♖xc3 ♗xc1
30 ♔xc1 ♖xf2
31 g4 ♖g2
32 ♖c4 ♖e2
33 ♖c5 ♖g2
34 ♘b5 ♖xg4

34...a6 35 ♖c7+ ♔d8 36 ♖xg7 ♖xc2+ 37 ♔d1 axb5 38 ♖xh7 ♖xa2 39 ♖xh6 is also hopeless for Black.

35 ♖c7+ ♔d8
36 ♖xa7 ♖g5
37 ♘d4 ♔c8
38 ♘xe6 ♖xh5
39 ♖xg7 ♗e4?!

This loses the bishop and shortens Black's suffering, but can hardly be called a mistake in comparison to 39...♖xe5 40 ♖c7+ ♔b8 41 ♖xh7 ♖xe6 42 c4.

40 ♖g8+ 1-0

Summary

It's very difficult to write in general terms about such an irrational game as this one. An opening surprise is an unpleasant matter, but here White's wish to avoid a theoretical clash went a bit too far. Adams's avoidance of the most principled continuations together with further careless play enabled Agdestein to whip up a vicious attack as early as move 10. Here we see a confirmation of the well-known axiom: "When the centre is closed, flank aggression has chances to be successful." After he got into trouble, Adams did his utmost to change the course of the game. He didn't weaken his threatened queenside any further and tried to create tactical counterchances. The crucial moment came after 17 ♖h3. Black's answer was inconsistent; as the analysis indicates, he should have continued his attack with 17...b3!. However, the main problem with 17...♗e7?! was that it allowed White to lash out tactically with 18 ♗xc4! – it ignored the necessity to keep the centre closed. After this turn-around the game became really murky with a lot of random tactics staying behind the scenes. While White made the most of his chances, his opponent, probably dejected by seeing a promising position slip through his fingers, sealed his fate with further mistakes.

Game 5

Artur Yusupov – Yuri Dokhoian

Bundesliga 1993/4

Queen's Gambit Declined [D31]

1 d4 d5
2 c4 e6
3 ♘c3 c6
4 e4

In this line of the Queen's Gambit, if White has any ambitions, he can't avoid a double-edged fight in any case. The Marshall Gambit is one of the most suitable weapons to achieve this.

4 ... dxe4
5 ♘xe4 ♗b4+
6 ♗d2

After the meek 6 ♘c3 Black has more ways to equalize, 6...c5 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♘f6 9 ♘f3 ♕a5 10 ♗d2 ♘e4 being the most frequent one.

6 ... ♕xd4
7 ♗xb4 ♕xe4+
8 ♗e2

This is an important theoretical position. For the sacrificed pawn White has a lead in development, an active bishop-pair and good prospects of play on the dark squares; Black must tread very carefully. 8 ♘e2 is less testing and affords Black, if he wants, a quick way out: 8...♘a6 9 ♗f8!? ♘e7 10 ♗xg7 ♘b4 11 ♗xh8 (11 ♕d6 ♘d3+ 12 ♔d2 ♘f5 is equal) 11...e5 12 ♕d6 ♘c2+ 13 ♔d2 ♗f5 14 ♘g3 ♕f4+ 15 ♔c3 ♘d5+! 16 cxd5 ♕d4+ 17 ♔b3 ♘xa1+ 18 ♔a3 ♘c2+ 19 ♔b3 ♘a1+ with a perpetual, Gomez Esteban-Illescas, Lisbon Z 1993.

8 ... c5

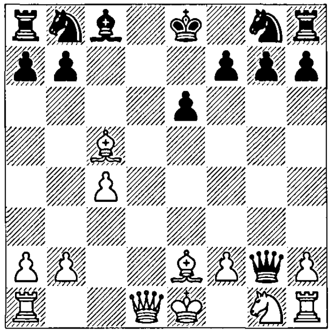
This move frees the c6-square for Black's knight or queen. Other playable options include 8...♘d7, 8...♘e7 and the most common move, 8...♘a6.

9 ♗xc5

The most logical continuation. Although 9 ♗c3 has also been tried, White's compensation after 9...♘e7 10 ♘f3 0-0 11 0-0 ♘bc6 12 ♖e1 ♕f4 13 ♗d3 f6 is less distinct than after the text-move. It's quite natural for White to strive for more open play.

9 ... ♕xg2 *(D)*

9...♘d7 was later introduced by Sveshnikov. However, it's no less risky than the text-move and lost most of its adherents after the following forceful game: 10 ♗d6 ♕xg2 11 ♗f3 ♕g5 12 h4 ♕f6 13 ♕b3 ♘e7 14 ♘e2 0-0 15 ♘g3 ♘e5 16 ♗e4 ♘5c6? 17 ♗xc6 bxc6 18 ♘h5 ♕f5 19 ♗xe7 ♖e8 20 ♘f6+! gxf6 21 ♖g1+ ♔h8 22 0-0-0 ♗a6 23 ♕e3! and the threat of ♕h6 cost Black his queen in Dreev-Sveshnikov, Russian Ch (St Petersburg) 1998.



10 ♕d2?!

What was the newest wrinkle in early 1994 has now disappeared from practice; the reason will become clear later. White has three other moves at his disposal and it's difficult to say which is the best. Instead, 10 ♕d4 ♘d7 11 ♗f3 (11 0-0-0 ♕g5+ is what White's 10 ♕d2 aims to prevent) 11...♕g5 12 ♗b4 ♕e5+ and 10 ♕d6 ♘d7 11 0-0-0 ♕c6 both lead to an endgame, and although White's initiative persists, the older continuation 10 ♗f3 ♕g5 11 ♗d6 is more natural. After 11...♘e7 12 ♘e2 ♘bc6 (12...0-0 13 ♖g1 ♕f6 14 ♘f4!? gives White a strong attack; 12...♘f5 13 ♗a3 is no less dangerous for Black) 13 ♗e4!? e5?! 14 ♖g1 ♕f6 15 ♘c3 ♗f5 16 ♗xe7! ♘xe7 17 ♗xb7 ♖b8 18 ♕a4+ ♗d7 19 ♕xa7 0-0 20 ♗e4 ♖xb2 21 0-0-0! White won a piece in Lugovoi-Karasev, St Petersburg Ch 1999.

10 ... ♕xh1

More or less forced. After 10...♘d7? 11 ♗f3 ♕g6 12 ♖d1! (12 0-0-0 ♘gf6 13 ♕d6?! ♕g5+ 14 ♗e3 ♕e5 is not clear) the threat of ♗xb7 is very strong, as Black doesn't have 12...♘gf6? in view of 13 ♕d6.

11 0-0-0 ♘d7

Other moves lose immediately: 11...♘c6? 12 ♗f3, 11...f6? 12 ♗h5+ or 11...♗d7? 12 ♕d6 ♔d8 13 ♗f3.

12 ♘f3 ♕xd1+?!

Here Dokhoian spent loads of time, which he missed dearly in the final phase. Nevertheless, his decision was inconsistent; he should have called White's bluff with the brave move 12...♕g2!?. Now White must be really clever to keep the game going:

1) The seemingly crushing 13 ♘e5?! is insufficient due to 13...♘gf6 (13...f6? loses immediately to 14 ♘xd7 ♕c6 15 ♘e5! ♕c7 16 ♗h5+, while after 13...♕xh2 14 ♘xd7 ♕c7 15 ♘e5! Black can't withstand the concentrated pressure for long). Black's main resource is a timely check on the c1-h6 diagonal:

1a) 14 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 (after 14...♗xd7 15 ♕d6 0-0-0??, 16 ♗xa7 mates) gets White nowhere.

1b) 14 ♕d6 ♕g5+ 15 f4 ♕xf4+ (15...♘e4 is possible as well) 16 ♔b1 ♘g8! and Black beats off the attack.

1c) Even after the more refined continuation 14 ♗f3 ♕xh2 15 ♕d6, Black convincingly shatters White's illusions with the accurate 15...♕f4+! (15...♘g8?! 16 ♘xf7! ♕xd6 17 ♘xd6+ and now 17...♔f8? is very risky in view of 18 ♗a3, while after 17...♔e7 18 ♘xc8++ ♔f6 19 ♖xd7 ♖xc8 20 ♗d4+ e5 21 ♗c3 the active bishops still make Black's technical task quite difficult) 16 ♔b1 ♘g8.

1d) The same goes for 14 ♗a3 ♘e4 15 ♕b4 ♕g5+ 16 f4 a5!.

1e) 14 ♗h5 ♘xh5 (14...♘e4!? 15 ♗xf7+ ♔d8 16 ♕a5+ b6 is also viable) 15 ♘xd7 (15 ♕d6 ♕g5+ 16 f4 ♕d8 and White has sacrificed too much) 15...f6 16 ♕d6 ♔f7 17 ♕e7+ ♔g6 and again White has little to show for a whole rook.

2) However, the case is not so simple after White's main resource, the quiet 13 ♗a3! *(D)*.

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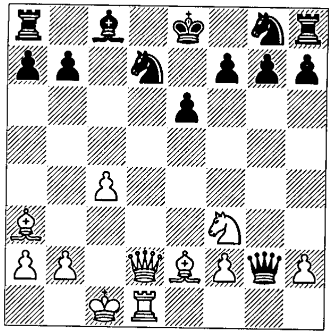


White removes his bishop from a potentially vulnerable square, prevents 13...♘gf6? in view of 14 ♕b4!, and intends to improve his position gradually. This was played in the only two practical examples with 12...♕g2 I was able to find:

2a) The passive 13...♕g6 illustrates White's idea well: 14 ♘e5 ♕h6 15 f4 ♘gf6 16 ♗f3 and Black can hardly move. The threat is ♔b1 and ♕d6.

2b) The greedy 13...♕xf2?! is very risky. After 14 ♘d4! (Black's point is 14 ♘e5? ♕xh2! 15 ♘xd7 ♕h6, swapping queens), apart from the obvious idea ♘b5-d6 White also threatens ♘xe6!; e.g., 14...♘e7 (14...♘gf6 15 ♕b4) 15 ♘xe6 ♕b6 16 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 17 ♗g4 ♕c6 18 ♘e6+! fxe6 19 ♗xe7+ ♔c7 20 ♗f3! and Black's position collapses. The main reason is clear enough: his rooks are totally inactive.

2c) Dangerous, but more to the point is 13...a5!?. Then:

2c1) 14 ♘e5 ♘gf6 15 ♗h5 is a motif we have already examined:

2c11) After 15...♘xh5?! 16 ♘xd7 f6 White has the extra resource 17 ♘b6 compared with line '1e'.

2c12) 15...♖a6 16 ♗xf7+ ♔d8 17 ♗h5 was played in the game Sulava-Palac, Croatian Ch (Slavonski Brod) 1995. Now Black can afford even 17...♘xh5! 18 ♘xd7 ♔c7 19 ♘b6 ♖xb6 20 ♗d6+ ♔d7! (20...♔c6? loses to 21 ♗b8) 21 ♗c5+ ♔e8 22 ♕d8+ ♔f7 23 ♕c7+ ♔g6, when he should win.

2c13) There doesn't seem to be anything decisive even after 15...g6!? 16 ♗f3 ♕xh2 17 ♘xd7 (we already know 17 ♕d6 ♕f4+ 18 ♖d2 ♘g8, while 17 ♗d6 ♕h4 18 ♖h1 fails to 18...♘e4!) 17...♗xd7 18 ♗xb7 (18 ♕g5?! 0-0-0!) 18...♖d8 19 ♗d6 ♕h4.

2c2) 14 ♘d4!? is less forcing, but more promising. However, here the compensation also remains speculative after 14...♖a6, since there is nothing concrete; e.g., 15 ♘b5 (15 ♗f3 ♕xh2 again creates the threat ...♕h6) 15...♖c6 16 ♕xa5 (16 ♘a7 ♕d5!) 16...♕xf2 17 ♘c7+ ♖xc7 18 ♕xc7 ♘e7.

2d) If all this makes Black feel uneasy, the most practical solution is 13...♘e7!? 14 ♘e5 0-0 15 ♗xe7 ♘xe5 (after 15...♖e8? 16 ♘xd7 ♖xe7 17 ♘b6 White wins a piece) 16 ♗xf8 ♗d7 17 ♗c5 (17 ♗b4, as in Flear-Vera, Elgoibar 1994, allows the advantageous 17...♕xf2! 18 ♗c3 f6 19 ♗xe5 fxe5 20 ♕xd7 ♕xe2 21 ♕xe6+ ♔h8) and now even the rude 'Fritzy' 17...♕xh2!? seems possible; for example, 18 ♗e3 (18 f4 ♘g6 and 18 ♗d6 ♗e8 19 ♕e3 f6 20 f4 ♘f7 21 ♕xe6 ♗c6 also promise White little) 18...♕g2 19 ♗f4 ♘g6 20 ♕xd7 ♕xf2! with a handful of extra pawns.

13 ♕xd1

13 ♗xd1!? deserves attention; 13...♘xc5 14 ♕d4 ♘e7 (14...♘d3+ 15 ♕xd3 with ♗a4+ in the air is not ideal for Black either) 15 ♕xc5 ♗d7 16 ♘e5 and now:

1) 16...♘c6 17 ♗f3! leads to the game (17 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 18 ♗a4 f6 19 ♕d4+ ♔e7 is hardly dangerous for Black; White does best to give a perpetual with 20 ♕c5+).

2) 16...♗c6 17 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 18 ♗a4 ♔d7, compared with note '2b' to Black's 16th move, gives White the dangerous extra idea 19 b4! (19 ♕d4+ is weaker due to 19...♔e7 20 ♕xg7 ♖ag8) 19...♖hc8 (19...a6 20 ♕b6 ♖hb8 21 a3! paralyses Black) 20 b5 ♘a5 21 b6+ ♘c6 22 bxa7.

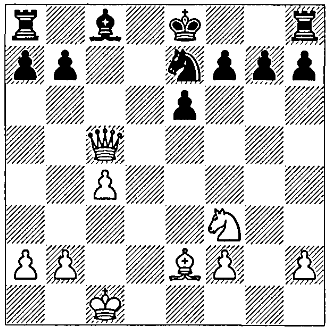
13 ... ♘xc5

14 ♕d4 ♘e7

The double attack wins one piece back, so White stays with a queen against two rooks and a pawn. Although the material balance is not in his favour, the dynamic factors show a different picture – Black has great problems coordinating his pieces, especially connecting his rooks. White's lead in development will allow him to level the material, while his pieces will still remain substantially more active. All in all Black's task is not easy: he must fight for equality and any mistake might be the decisive one. Note that 14...♘f6 is much worse, as after 15 ♕xc5 ♗d7 16 ♘e5 the knight is unassailable.

15 ♕xc5 *(D)*

B



15 ... ♗d7!

Definitely an improvement compared with the first game with 10 ♕d2, Tataev-Boguslavsky, Protvino 1992, which went 15...f6?! 16 ♘d4 a6. Now White could have played 17 ♗h5+!? g6 18 ♗f3 e5 (18...♔f7 19 ♕c7 practically paralyses Black) 19 ♘c6! ♘f5 20 ♘xe5 (the point of White's 17th move) and Black will not be able to finish his development until the bitter end. 15...♘c6, with the idea ...♗d7 and ...0-0-0, also doesn't solve Black's problems in view of 16 ♘g5 or even 16 b4!?.

16 ♘e5

16 ♕c7 gets White nowhere in view of 16...♗c6 and ...♖c8, but an interesting alternative is 16 ♘d4 ♘f5!? (16...a6 17 ♕b6 ♘c6 18 ♕xb7 ♖b8 19 ♕c7 ♖c8 20 ♕d6 is miserable for Black; he still hasn't managed to connect his rooks) 17 ♘xf5 (17 ♘b5 b6! and ...♗xb5 helps Black) 17...exf5 18 ♗f3 ♖c8 19 ♕d4 b6.

Black has survival chances, which seem about as realistic as in the game.

16 ... ♘c6?!

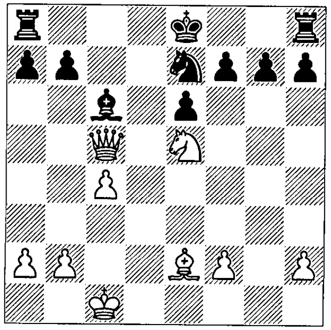
Black understandably tries to challenge the centralized knight. Other moves:

1) 16...f6?! has the same idea, but is less accurate:

1a) 17 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 18 ♕b5+ ♔c7 19 ♗g4 ♖ad8 20 ♗xe6 ♖d6 enables Black to activate his pieces and equalize.

1b) Much more dangerous is 17 ♗h5+! g6 18 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 19 ♕d4+! (19 ♗f3 ♘c6 20 ♗xc6+ bxc6 21 ♕d4+ ♔e7 is at most a draw for White) 19...♔c7 20 ♕xf6 ♖he8 (20...♘c6 21 ♕g7+ forces the king into the open) 21 ♕f4+ ♔d7 22 ♗f3 ♘c6 23 c5. White has increased his advantage, as Black's pawns are weak and his king is exposed.

2) 16...♗c6!? *(D)* deserves much closer attention:



2a) 17 b4 f6 (after 17...b6? 18 ♕d6 ♖c8 19 ♘xc6 ♘xc6? 20 c5! there is no defence against ♗b5 or ♗a6) 18 ♘xc6 bxc6! (18...♘xc6 gives White a wide choice of promising continuations, such as 19 b5 or 19 ♕d6) 19 ♗f3 ♔f7! beats off the attack, as after 20 b5 ♖ac8! 21 bxc6 ♖c7 Black can already have ambitions.

2b) 17 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 (17...bxc6?! is worse since after 18 ♗f3 Black loses either the a7-, g7- or c6-pawn and in the first two cases he doesn't even manage to exchange White's bishop) 18 ♗f3 ♔d7 (18...♖c8 19 b3 ♔d7 20 ♗xc6+ ♖xc6 21 ♕xa7 ♔c7 22 ♕a5+ ♔d7 23 ♕g5 leaves Black's rooks too passive) 19 ♗xc6+ bxc6 20 ♕d4+ ♔e7 21 ♕xg7 ♖hg8 22 ♕e5!? (22 ♕xh7 ♖g4) 22...♖g1+ 23 ♔c2 ♖g2. Although White is still better, the outcome is open. Later in the game Black can only dream about such an active position.

17 ♗f3!

17 ♘xd7? ♔xd7 18 ♗f3 ♖hc8 ruins White's chances.

17 ... ♘xe5

17...♖c8!? (threatening to play ...b6) 18 ♗xc6 (18 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 gets White nowhere) 18...♗xc6 19 ♕xa7 (19 b3!? a6 20 ♕b6 is also no bed of roses for Black) 19...0-0 is definitely unpleasant for Black, but perhaps less so than the game continuation.

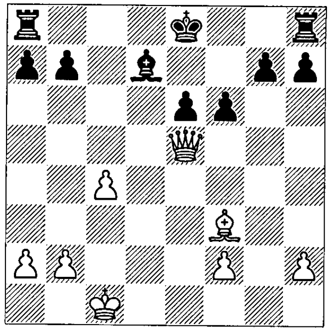
18 ♕xe5 f6 *(D)*

Now it's hard to criticize this move:

1) 18...0-0 19 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 20 ♕c7 is clearly better for White.

2) 18...♗c6 19 ♕xg7 ♔e7 (after 19...0-0-0 20 ♗xc6 bxc6 21 ♕xf7 White wins at least another pawn while Black remains passive) 20 ♗h5! (20 ♗xc6 gives White an extra tempo compared with note '2b' to Black's 16th move, but this is even more incisive) 20...♖hf8 21 ♕xh7. White plans ♕g7, ♗g6 and a further advance of the h-pawn, and there is nothing much Black can do about this.

3) 18...0-0-0 19 ♕xg7 ♖hg8 20 ♕f6 ♗c6!? (20...♖gf8 21 ♕e7 is similar to the game) 21 ♗xc6 bxc6 22 ♕xf7 ♖g1+ 23 ♔c2 ♖d7 24 ♕xe6 ♔c7 looks awful, but here at least Black's rooks cooperate, and he can set up a tough defence with ...♖g7-f7.



19 ♕g3

19 ♕a5 b6! (19...♖c8?! 20 b3 ♗c6 21 ♗xc6+ bxc6 22 ♕xa7 0-0 23 ♕d7 leads to a nasty position for Black) 20 ♕a6 (20 ♕h5+ g6 21 ♕h4 ♖c8 doesn't worry Black) 20...♖c8 21 ♗b7 ♖c7 22 ♕xa7 ♖xc4+ is far from clear. Similarly, the tempting 19 ♕c7 gives Black a lot of counterplay after 19...♖c8 20 ♕xb7 ♖xc4+ 21 ♔d2 ♔e7 (21...a5 22 ♕a8+) 22 ♕xa7 ♖hc8; it's not so easy to get the united passed pawns started.

19 ... 0-0-0

20 ♕xg7 ♖hg8

21 ♕e7!

21 ♕xf6 ♖df8 22 ♕c3 ♖f4 is a less consistent continuation, as it opens the position for Black's rooks. The text-move leaves Black gasping for breath.

21 ... e5

After 21...♖g1+? 22 ♔c2 White threatens ♗xb7+, while 21...♖ge8 22 ♕xh7 doesn't alter the situation.

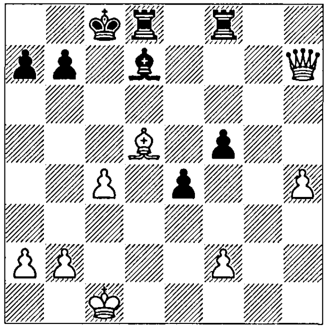
22 ♗d5 ♖gf8

23 ♕xh7?!

White has already considerably squeezed his opponent and it was not necessary to take this pawn, as Black is close to zugzwang. After, for example, 23 h4 or 23 b4!? Black can't play 23...♖de8 due to 24 ♕c5+ ♔b8 25 ♕d6+ ♔c8 26 ♗xb7+, while otherwise White can either take the h-pawn at a better moment, or prepare the further advance of his queenside pawns (b5, c5-c6, etc.).

23 ... f5

24 h4 e4 *(D)*



25 h5?

Black has managed to get his pawns one step further, but this still doesn't help if he can't exchange White's powerful d5-bishop. Yusupov points out the correct active prophylaxis against this idea: 25 b4! ♔b8 (25...♗c6? 26 ♗xc6 bxc6 27 ♕xa7 f4 is now too slow; after 28 b5 Black gets mated first) 26 b5. With ...♗c6 stopped, Black is devoid of any effective counterplay. Although the text-move doesn't squander all White's winning chances, it still deserves a question mark, as now Dokhoian gets back into the game.

25 ... ♗c6!

Black grabs the opportunity to complicate the situation by advancing his central pawns. 25...♖h8? loses listlessly to 26 ♕g6.

26 ♗xc6 bxc6

27 ♕xa7

After 27 h6 ♖de8 28 ♔d2 f4 29 ♔e2 e3 Black's pawns are just as dangerous as the h-pawn.

27 ... f4

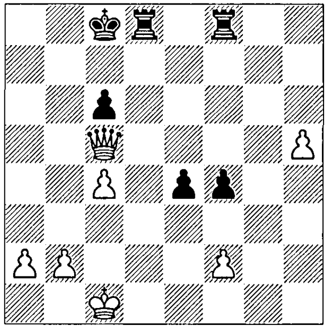
28 ♕a6+ ♔c7

29 ♕a7+?!

29 c5! was certainly cleverer. After 29...e3 30 ♕b6+ ♔c8!? (30...♔d7 31 ♕b7+ ♔e6 32 ♕xc6+ ♔e5 33 ♕f3 and the king just gets in the way; the attempt to support the e-pawn as in the game with 33...♔d4 34 c6 ♖de8 loses to 35 c7 e2 36 ♕c3+ ♔d5 37 ♕d3+ and 38 c8♕+) 31 ♕xc6+ ♔b8 White gets the game position with an extra tempo, but his win still isn't so clear; e.g., 32 ♕b6+ ♔c8 33 c6 ♖f7 with the idea ...♖e8.

29 ... ♔c8

30 ♕c5 *(D)*



The only try. White can't passively blockade the central avalanche, so he pins his hopes on Black's exposed king and his own passed pawn.

30 ... e3!

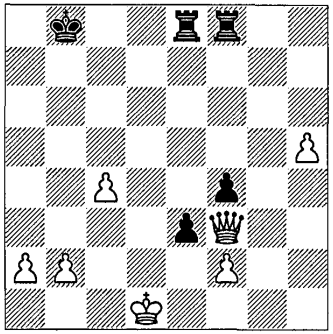
Also forced; 30...♖f6? loses the proud e4-pawn to 31 ♕e5.

31 ♕xc6+ ♔b8
32 ♕f3

White still aspires for more than a half-point, which he would have to concede immediately after 32 h6 e2.

32 ... ♖de8
33 ♔d1 *(D)*

B



33 ... exf2?

In heavy time-trouble, Black returns the favour and commits the losing mistake. 33...e2+ 34 ♔e1 ♖g8 35 ♕xf4+ ♔a8 leads to a draw. White naturally always has a perpetual after 36 ♕f3+ (an attempt to win with 36 ♕h2?! ♖g4 37 f4 ♖e4 can easily lead to the opposite result) 36...♔a7 37 ♕a3+.

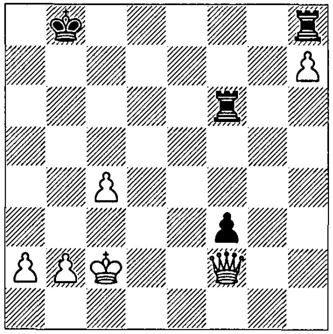
34 ♕xf2 f3
35 h6 ♖f6

35...♖e2? loses a rook to 36 ♕b6+ ♔a8 37 ♕a5+ and ♕b4+. If Black tries to prevent h7, he loses: 35...♖e7 (35...♖f7 36 ♕b6+ ♖b7 37 ♕f6 disarms Black's pawn) 36 ♕b6+! (36 ♕h2+? ♔a8 gets White nowhere, as after 37 h7?? ♖d8+ he even loses) 36...♔a8 (36...♔c8? 37 ♕c6+) 37 ♕c6+ ♖b7 38 ♔e1 f2+ 39 ♔f1 and White neutralizes the f2-pawn. Finally, the interpolation of 35...♖d8+ 36 ♔c2 ♖f6 (or 36...♖d7 37 ♕h2+ ♔a8 38 h7 f2 39 h8♕ f1♕ 40 ♕h1+ with a won endgame for White) gives White the additional possibility 37 ♕h4! ♖ff8 38 h7 f2 39 h8♕ ♖xh8 40 ♕xf2. Generally speaking, the exchange of passed pawns leads to a won position for White, if he has no problems with his king.

36 h7 ♖h8?!

Black defends against ♕h2+, but after this White has more than one way to win. 36...♔b7 37 ♕d4 ♖ff8 38 h8♕ ♖xh8 39 ♕d5+ ♔a7 40 ♕xf3 ♖d8+ 41 ♔c2 is also quite simple. A more testing alternative was 36...♖d8+! 37 ♔c2 ♖h8 *(D)*:

W



1) Now 38 ♕d4? ♖ff8 39 ♕d6+ ♔a8! (not 39...♔c8? losing to 40 c5! f2 41 c6 ♖d8 42 ♕e7) leads only to a draw, as White's c-pawn can't join the attack effectively; e.g., 40 c5 f2 41 ♕a6+ ♔b8 42 c6? ♖xh7.

2) The right way is 38 ♕g3+! ♔a8 39 ♕g7 ♖ff8 40 c5 f2 41 c6 ♖b8 42 ♕g2, with a decisive double attack.

37 ♕g3+ ♔c8

After 37...♔a8 38 ♕g8+ ♖f8 39 ♕d5+ ♔b8 40 ♔e1! the participation of White's king spells the end.

38 ♕g4+ ♔d8?

After the forced 38...♔b8 White has a wide choice. One convincing way is 39 ♕d4 ♖ff8 40 ♕d6+ ♔c8 41 ♔e1, as 41...♖e8+ 42 ♔f2 ♖xh7 43 ♕c6+ ♔d8 44 ♕a8+ costs Black his h7-rook.

39 ♕g5 1-0

Black's flag fell, but he loses a rook in any case.

Summary

In this game Black is confronted with a relatively obscure sacrificial idea, which was nearly unknown at that time. Although later analysis and games have shown 10 ♕d2?! to be rather dubious, it's immensely more difficult to prove this over the board, treading virgin territory and fearing some crushing attack. Dokhoian didn't make the right choice on move 12; those who later came down this path were wiser. When confronted with such a decision, one should try to be as practical as possible. In this case, after 12...♕xd1+ White could continue his attack in a position with more or less equal material, risking very little, whereas the margin for error by Black in the phase from move 14-18 was very narrow and even minor inaccuracies could land him in a helpless situation. After 12...♕g2!? Black would also have to suffer quite a few scary moments, but as there is no forced win in sight, the burden of proof rests on White; after all, he is a whole rook down.

By move 23 Yusupov achieved what can be considered a technically won position, but a couple of careless moves (especially 25 h5?) gave Black serious counterplay. When your opponent is suffering in a cramped position, it's worth taking a good look at any possible freeing attempts. Preventing them usually outweighs even immediate material gain; in this case the prophylactic 25 b4 wouldn't have delayed White's active plans for long. Black reacted promptly with 25...♗c6!, only to throw away the draw with the illogical 33...exf2?. Passed pawns should be pushed, not exchanged. With the f-pawn only on its sixth rank, White's queen was sufficiently mobile for him to win easily.

Game 6
Boris Gelfand – Gerald Hertneck
SKA tournament, Munich 1994
Benko Gambit [A57]

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 c5
3 d5 b5
4 cxb5 a6
5 f3

In the 1990s White increasingly often started declining the Benko Gambit to avoid Black's long-lasting positional pressure and pursue active goals of his own. The text-move and 5 b6 are the most popular representatives of this trend. For a viable strategy connected with 5 bxa6, see Nenashev-Ki.Georgiev, Recklinghausen 1998 (Game 35).

5 ... axb5

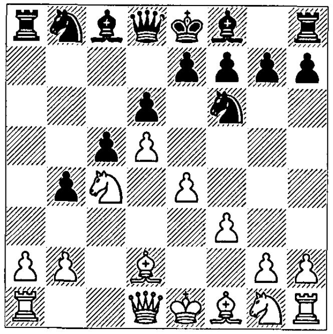
The stereotyped Benko continuation 5...g6 6 e4 ♗g7 7 ♘a3 0-0 8 ♘e2! e6 9 ♘c3 has a bad reputation despite the occasional revival attempt. Here the ideas behind 5 f3 show clearly: White strives for central control and intends to neutralize Black's queenside play by creating and overprotecting the stronghold on b5. Currently, attention is focused mostly on the line 5...e6 6 e4 exd5 7 e5 ♕e7 8 ♕e2 ♘g8 9 ♘c3 ♗b7 10 ♘h3 c4!?, a sharp continuation introduced into high-level practice by Hertneck in 1991. The text-move was considered the main move at the time of the current game; below we will see the reason why it is less fashionable now.

6 e4 ♕a5+
7 ♗d2

After 7 ♘c3 b4 8 ♘b5 d6 9 a4 g6 the b5 outpost can't be maintained effectively: Black plans ...♗a6 and ...♘e8-c7 and the b4-pawn seriously cramps White. Somewhat later 7 b4 appeared on the scene, but it was only a flash in the pan and Black has more than one way to get a satisfactory position. A less-known method is the simple 7...cxb4 8 ♘d2 d6!? 9 ♘b3 ♕b6 10 ♕d3 ♗d7 11 ♗e3 ♕b7 12 ♘e2 g6 13 ♘ed4 ♗g7 14 ♕d2 0-0 15 ♗d3 ♖a4 16 ♖c1 ♕a6 (16...e6!?) 17 ♖c2 ♖c8 18 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 19 0-0 ♕a6 20 ♗b1 and White only just about had sufficient compensation in Scherbakov-Shovunov, Russian Ch (Elista) 1997.

7 ... b4
8 ♘a3 d6
9 ♘c4 ♕d8!? *(D)*

The best move, but what's the point of this paradoxical retreat? After 9...♕c7 10 a3 bxa3 (10...e6 11 dxe6 ♗xe6 allows the strong 12 ♗f4! ♗xc4 13 ♗xc4, when White has a durable advantage with his unopposed light-squared bishop and central grip) 11 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 12 bxa3 g6 13 ♕a4+ ♘bd7 14 ♘e2! ♗g7 15 ♘c3 White is better. Earlier 9...♕a7 used to be popular, but the following game makes a strong impression: 10 a3 g6 11 ♘e2 (the more usual 11 ♗d3 ♗g7 12 ♘e2 ♘bd7!? 13 0-0 bxa3 14 ♖xa3 ♕b8 is less incisive) 11...♗g7 12 ♘c1! 0-0 13 ♘b3 bxa3 14 ♖xa3 ♕b7 15 ♗e2 ♖xa3 16 bxa3 ♗d7 17 ♘ba5 ♕a7 18 0-0 ♘a6 19 ♕c2 ♖b8 20 ♖b1 ♘c7 21 ♖b3 ♘fe8 22 ♕b1 ♖xb3 23 ♕xb3 e6 24 ♕b6! ♕xb6 25 ♘xb6 ♗b5 26 ♗xb5 ♘xb5 27 ♘ac4 and White's distant passed pawn gave him a large advantage in Jaworski-Protaziuk, Soczewka 1992. Not only top players can realize long-term strategic plans.



10 a3

This move allows Black to demonstrate his idea. Just two rounds later, the more subtle 10 ♗d3!? was played in Van der Sterren-Hertneck, Munich SKA 1994. Although subsequent practice has shown Black is not without resources, White still retains the initiative after 10...e6 11 dxe6 ♗xe6 12 ♘e2 d5 13 exd5 ♘xd5 14 0-0 (14 ♘f4 ♘xf4 15 ♗xf4 ♘d7!? 16 0-0 ♕f6 17 ♕d2 ♗e7 18 ♗e4 ♗xc4 19 ♗xa8 ♗xf1 20 ♖xf1 0-0 led to a quick draw in H.Olafsson-Wang Zili, Moscow OL 1994) 14...♗e7, and now:

1) 15 ♘f4 ♘xf4 16 ♗xf4 0-0 17 ♕c2 can even be met by 17...♘c6!?, as 18 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 19 ♗e4 (after 19 ♗d3?! b3! 20 ♕xb3 ♘a5 21 ♕c3 ♗xc4 22 ♗xc4 ♗f6 White loses a piece) 19...♕d4+ 20 ♗e3 (20 ♘e3 ♖xa2 21 ♖xa2 b3! and Black's pawn will be a tower of strength) 20...♕xc4 is about equal.

2) More demanding is 15 ♕c2!? ♘c6 (15...♘d7 is worse in view of 16 ♘f4 ♘xf4 17 ♗xf4 ♘b6 18 ♖fd1) 16 ♗e4 (16 ♖fe1 is unimpressive due to 16...h6 17 ♗f5 ♗xf5 18 ♕xf5 0-0 19 ♖ad1 ♗f6 20 ♗xh6 ♘ce7!? 21 ♕g4 ♕c8), when the annoying pin complicates Black's task; e.g., 16...♖a7 17 ♘f4 ♘xf4 18 ♗xc6+ ♔f8 19 ♗xf4 ♕d4+ 20 ♗e3 ♕xc4 21 ♕xc4 ♗xc4 22 ♖fc1 ♖xa2 23 ♖xa2 ♗xa2 24 ♖a1! b3 25 ♖c1 with some advantage for White.

10 ... e6

Black must undermine White's centre immediately. It's too late after 10...bxa3 11 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 12 bxa3 e6?!, since 13 ♗a5 ♕d7 14 ♕b3 gives White a strong attack.

11 dxe6

White can't seriously hurt Black's king after 11 axb4 ♖xa1 12 ♕xa1 exd5 13 exd5 ♘xd5 14 ♕a8 ♗e6 15 bxc5 dxc5 16 ♗a5 ♕c8 17 ♘e5 ♗d6 18 ♗b5+ ♔e7 19 ♕a7+ ♘d7 20 ♘c6+ ♔f6.

11 ... ♗xe6

12 axb4

12 ♗f4?! without the queen on c7 allows 12...d5, while 12 ♘e3!? d5 13 ♗b5+ ♗d7 14 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 15 e5 d4 16 exf6 dxe3 17 ♗xe3 ♕xd1+ 18 ♔xd1 ♘d7!? 19 fxg7 ♗xg7 gives Black compensation for the pawn.

12 ... ♖xa1

13 ♕xa1 d5

14 exd5

The interesting idea 14 ♘e5!? was discovered somewhat later. However, it can hardly endanger Black after 14...dxe4 (14...♗d6 15 ♗b5+ ♔f8 16 ♘d3 dxe4 17 bxc5! gives White good chances for an advantage) 15 ♗b5+ ♘fd7! (15...♘bd7? is a serious mistake since after 16 ♕a6! Black has no suitable defence against ♘c6) 16 ♕a8 and now:

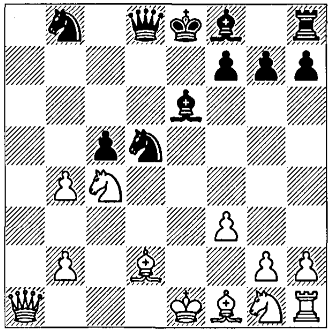
1) 16...exf3?! 17 ♘gxf3 ♗d6 18 bxc5 ♗xc5 19 ♗a5 ♗b6 20 ♗b4 leaves Black's king in grave danger.

2) 16...cxb4 17 ♕xe4 (17 ♗g5?! ♕xg5! 18 ♕xb8+ ♔e7 19 ♘c6+ ♔f6 20 ♕d8+ ♔g6 gets White nowhere) 17...♕b6 18 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 19 ♕a8+ ♕d8 is approximately equal.

3) 16...♗d6!? is the most ambitious. Then 17 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 18 ♕xe4 (18 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 19 ♕xe4 ♕a8! can be dangerous only for White) 18...0-0 gives Black enough play for the pawn.

14 ... ♘xd5 *(D)*

With the centre wide open White is beginning to feel the drawbacks of the move f3. His knight is deprived of its natural square and moreover his dark squares are vulnerable: danger looms on both the d8-h4 and a7-g1 diagonals. The extra pawn is of little consequence here and Gelfand rightly feels it's time to bail out.



15 ♕a4+

15 b5 is risky. Black had a powerful attack after 15...♘b4 16 ♗xb4?! (16 ♕a5 is better) 16...cxb4 17 b3 ♗c5 18 ♕e5 ♘d7! 19 ♕xg7 ♖f8 20 ♘h3 ♘f6 21 ♕g5 ♗d4 in Komljenović-Vaïsser, Oviedo rpd 1993. Even here White can consider 15 ♘e5 ♗d6 16 ♗b5+ ♔e7 17 ♘c4 ♘xb4 18 ♗xb4 cxb4 19 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 20 ♕a7+ ♘d7 21 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 22 ♘e2 ♖c8, as in M.Gurevich-Riemersma, Bruges 1995. Now the accurate 23 ♕e3+ ♔f8 24 ♕d2! leads to equality.

15 ... ♘d7!?

Black activates another piece. 15...♗d7 is weaker in view of 16 b5 ♘b4 17 f4 and ♘f3.

16 ♘e5

White doesn't want to help Black with his development by playing 16 bxc5?! ♗xc5, as his king would soon become a target. Also 16 b5 ♘b4 (or even 16...♗e7!?) is not ideal for White.

16 ... ♘b6!

Black also does his best to disrupt his opponent's development and leaves the b4-pawn alive for the time being. 16...♘xb4 lets White practically force a draw by 17 ♗b5 ♗d6 18 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 19 ♗xb4 cxb4 20 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 21 ♕a8+ ♕d8 22 ♕c6+, as the attempt to avoid repetition with 22...♔e7 23 ♕e4+ ♔f8 24 ♘e2 is hardly worth the trouble. And although 16...cxb4 17 ♗b5 ♘5b6 (17...♗d6 18 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 19 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 20 ♕a8+ ♕d8 21 ♕c6+ is again a perpetual) 18 ♕a5! (the simplifying 18 ♘xd7? ♘xa4! 19 ♘e5+ ♗d7 20 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 21 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 leads to serious trouble for White) 18...♗d6 19 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 20 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 21 ♘e2 leaves some more tension in the position, it doesn't pose White too many problems.

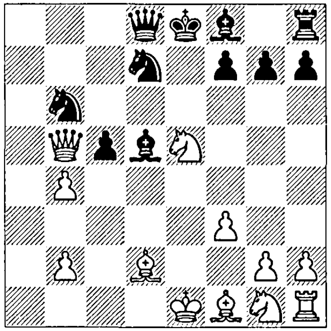
17 ♕c6!

It's all about keeping the b5-square free for the bishop. 17 ♕b5?! is weaker because of 17...cxb4.

17 ... ♗d5

The evaluation of 17...cxb4 18 ♗b5 depends on the line 18...♕h4+ 19 g3 ♕d4 20 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 21 ♘e2! ♕e5 22 ♕xb6 ♗xb5 23 ♕e3. Although Black will have two bishops in the endgame, White gets his forces out more quickly (♘d4, ♔f2 and ♖d1) and holds the balance.

18 ♕b5 *(D)*

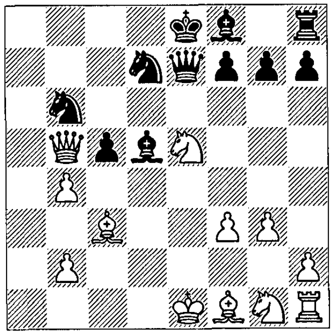


18 ... ♕h4+!?

With the bishop on d5, 18...cxb4? loses to 19 ♘xd7, while after 18...♕e7?! 19 f4 cxb4 (19...f6 20 bxc5 fxe5 21 cxb6 is good for White) 20 ♗e3! f6 (20...♕h4+? 21 g3! ♕e7 22 ♗xb6 ♗xh1 23 ♗h3) 21 ♗xb6 fxe5 22 ♕xd5 exf4+ 23 ♔d2!? ♘xb6 24 ♗b5+ ♘d7 25 ♘h3 White's pieces are suddenly swarming all over. Black must fight for his life after 25...♕d6 26 ♖e1+ ♔d8 27 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 28 ♘g5 ♘e5 29 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 30 ♘f7+ ♔e7 31 ♘xe5. Also 18...♕a8 19 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 (19...♕a1+ 20 ♔f2 ♘xd7 21 ♗c3 only side-tracks the queen) 20 ♕a5 isn't unduly worrying for White, so the text-move is actually the safest option.

19 ♔d1?!

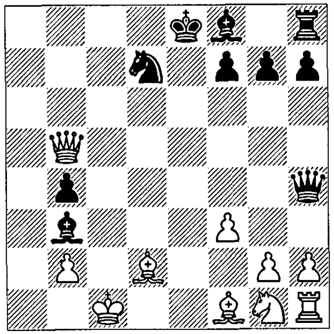
Now White's king will be permanently in danger. The right continuation is 19 g3 ♕e7 20 ♗c3 *(D)*.



Although now White has been deprived of the natural way to protect his knight (f4), the move g3 gives him an extra possibility he didn't have in the line above: 20...cxb4 21 ♗d4 f6 (21...b3 22 ♔f2 only improves the white king's position) 22 ♗h3!. Now the most sensible option is 22...♗e6 (22...fxe5?! is worse due to 23 ♗xb6 ♗e6 24 ♕c6) 23 ♕c6 (23 ♘c6?! ♗c4+) 23...♗xh3 24 ♘xh3 ♕d6 with equality.

19 ... ♗e7?!

Black misses his chance. Hertneck himself shows the right move was 19...cxb4! 20 ♘xd7 (20 f4 ♗d6 21 ♘gf3 ♕f2 does little to improve White's predicament) 20...♗b3+ 21 ♔c1 ♘xd7 *(D)*.



Now White must try to exchange queens, as otherwise he risks getting overrun once Black mobilizes his forces:

1) 22 ♘h3 ♕d4! 23 ♗d3 ♗d6 24 ♗f5 (24 ♖e1+? ♗e5) 24...0-0! 25 ♕xd7 ♕c5+ 26 ♔b1 ♖a8 illustrates well the dangers White is facing.

2) Better is 22 g3 ♕d4 23 ♗h3 (perhaps even the risky 23 ♗d3!?, with the idea that 23...♕a7 can be met by 24 ♗xb4, is playable) 23...♕c5+ 24 ♕xc5 ♗xc5. Although White has reached the endgame, his forces are uncoordinated and his vulnerable king and somewhat sensitive kingside pawns, together with Black's active pieces, complicate his defensive task.

20 bxc5

Logical enough, as it forces Black to move his bishop again. 20 ♘e2? ♗b3+ 21 ♔c1 ♗a4 22 ♕a6 ♘xe5 23 ♕xb6 0-0 24 ♘f4 ♖d8 25 g3 ♕g5 doesn't help White's development at all: Black has a raging attack with threats such as ...♕f5 or ...♘xf3, while 26 ♘d5? just drops a piece to 26...♖xd5. 20 g3?! is more to the point, but it weakens f3 and makes it hard for White to develop the g1-knight. After 20...♕d4! (20...♕f6 is less convincing due to 21 bxc5 ♗xc5 22 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 23 ♗h3!) 21 ♘xd7 (21 bxc5 0-0 can lead to the same position) 21...♘xd7 22 bxc5 (22 ♗h3 0-0! again allows Black to ignore the pin with impunity; his threats ...♗g5 and especially ...♖a8 are too strong) 22...0-0 White's king will suffer due to Black's lead in development.

20 ... ♗xc5

21 ♘e2

21 b4? doesn't win material, but gives Black a raging attack after 21...♗b3+ 22 ♔c1 ♕d4! 23 ♕d3 ♕a1+ 24 ♕b1 ♕a3+ 25 ♕b2 ♗xb4. 21 g3 ♕d4 22 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 23 ♗h3 is again met by 23...0-0 24 ♗xd7 ♖a8 and the attack triumphs; e.g., 25 ♗f5 ♗c4 26 ♘e2 ♕d5 27 ♗e4 ♗b3+!. However, White is now ready to activate his kingside pieces, so Black must act.

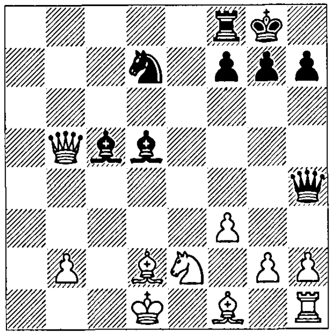
21 ... 0-0!

22 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 *(D)*

23 ♘f4!

23 ♕xd7? spells disaster after 23...♖d8! (even better than the advantageous endgame after 23...♗b3+ 24 ♔c1 ♖d8 25 g3! ♖xd7 26 gxh4 ♗e3!), when White faces an unhappy choice:

1) 24 ♕b5 ♗c4 25 ♕xc5 (25 g3 loses to 25...♖xd2+! 26 ♔e1 ♖d1+ 27 ♔xd1 ♕d8+) 25...♗b3+ 26 ♕c2 (26 ♔c1 ♕e1+! 27 ♗xe1 ♖d1# is the recurrent main motif) 26...♗xc2+ 27 ♔xc2 ♕a4+ 28 ♔c1 ♕d7 and the attack nets Black material.



2) 24 ♕xd8+ ♕xd8 25 ♘c3 ♗b3+ 26 ♔c1 ♗b4 and White can't survive for long.

3) 24 g3 ♕f6! (24...♖xd7 25 gxh4 ♗xf3 26 ♗h3 ♖xd2+ or 26...♖d3!? is very pleasant for Black, but not more than that) 25 ♕b5 (25 ♕c7 ♗b6) 25...♗e3! and White's position collapses.

With the text-move, Gelfand gains a tempo and the piece under much better circumstances.

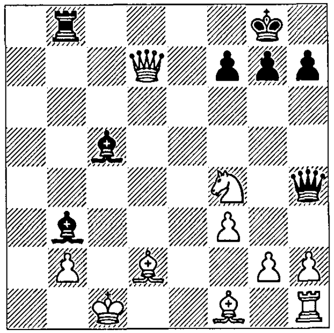
23 ... ♖b8

Black continues the forcing play. After 23...♗a2? White doesn't have to take the knight immediately and can make a useful move such as 24 ♗d3.

24 ♕xd7 ♗b3+

25 ♔c1 *(D)*

After 25 ♔e2? ♖d8 26 g3 ♕f6 27 ♗c3 ♕a6+ White loses on the spot.



25 ... ♕f6?

Black makes a tactical mistake. 25...♖a8 26 ♗d3 ♖a1+ 27 ♗b1 isn't good either, but again 25...♖d8! was correct. After 26 g3 (again a forced move) 26...♖xd7 (26...♕f6?! is insufficient due to 27 ♕b5 ♗e3 28 ♕xb3) 27 gxh4 ♗e3 28 ♗d3 (28 ♘d3? ♖c7+ 29 ♔b1 ♗xd2 and the threat of ...♗c2+ costs White a piece) 28...♖c7+ (a reliable road to a draw is 28...♗xf4 29 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 30 ♗xf4 ♖d3 and ...♗d5) 29 ♔b1 ♗xd2 White's pawns are a mess and, with his active bishops, Black has sufficient compensation and doesn't have to worry about the outcome of the game.

26 ♗b5!

Hertneck readily admitted he had overlooked this strong developing move. White must still be very careful. The alternatives are weak: 26 ♘d3?? ♕a6 with mate, while 26 ♗d3? ♗a3! is also winning for Black after 27 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 28 ♕d3+ g6 29 ♕c3 ♖c8!. Finally, 26 ♕c7? ♗d6 (26...♖a8 27 ♔b1 ♕d4 fails to 28 ♕c6!) 27 ♕c6 ♕d8 28 ♗a6 ♖b6 gives Black at least a draw.

26 ... ♗d4

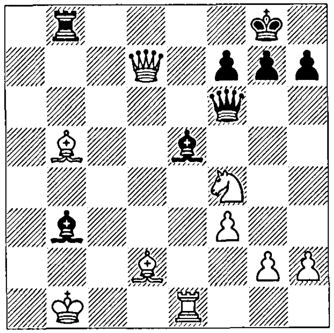
The most testing move, threatening ...♗xb2+ and ...♖a8. White's task is easier after 26...♖a8 27 ♔b1 or 26...♗a3 27 ♘d3 ♖d8 28 ♕c6.

27 ♖e1!

White activates his last piece, creating a threat of his own. 27 ♘d3? ♗e6! would cost White material, while 27 ♘d5? is also weak in view of 27...♗xb2+ 28 ♔b1 ♕g6+! 29 ♔xb2 ♕c2+ 30 ♔a3 ♕a2+ 31 ♔b4 ♗xd5, when the wandering king will succumb shortly. 27 ♔b1 g5! (27...♗xb2 28 ♖e1 transposes to the game) 28 ♘d3 ♗e6 29 ♕c6 ♕f5 still gives Black swindling chances.

27 ... ♗xb2+

28 ♔b1 ♗e5 *(D)*



The only move: Black not only prevents mate, but also avoids the exchange of rooks.

29 ♗c3?

With the full point so close Gelfand stumbles in time-trouble; now Black exploits White's exposed king to win the piece back and reach an equal endgame. 29 ♘d3?! ♗e6 (29...♗c4 30 ♘xe5 ♗xb5 31 ♕a7 is hopeless for Black) 30 ♕c6 ♗f5 31 ♔c2!? (31 ♕d5? allows 31...♕e6!, drawing) 31...♖c8 32 ♕xc8+ ♗xc8 33 ♖xe5 gives White excellent winning chances, but there were at least two more convincing continuations: 29 ♖e4 ♗e6 30 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 31 ♕d3 and 29 ♖c1 ♗e6 30 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 31 ♔c2! both stop Black's attack and win rather easily.

29 ... ♗e6!
30 ♗xe5

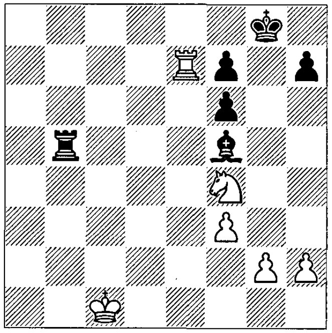
30 ♘xe6 ♗xc3 31 ♘d8 ♕xd8 is an even clearer draw.

30 ... ♗xd7

The 'refined' 30...♕xe5? is refuted by 31 ♕d8+!, when Black remains a piece down after all.

31 ♗xf6 gxf6
32 ♔c1 ♖xb5
33 ♖e7 ♗f5 *(D)*

W



The dust has settled and there is little left to fight for.

34 ♖e8+ ♔g7
35 ♘h5+ ♔h6

35...♔g6? is clearly weaker in view of 36 g4.

36 ♘xf6

36 g4 ♗g6 37 ♘xf6 ♖b1+ 38 ♔d2 ♔g5 can't change the result.

36 ... ♖b1+
37 ♔d2 ♖b2+
38 ♔e3 ♖xg2
39 ♔f4 ♗e6

39...♗h3 40 ♖g8 ♖xh2?? 41 ♖g5 would be quite an upset.

40 h4

After 40 ♖h8 ♖a2 the threat ...♔g7 forces a perpetual by 41 ♖g8 ♖xh2 42 ♖g4! ♖a2 43 ♘g8+.

40 ... ♖g6
41 ♔e5 ♖g1
42 ♔f4 ½-½

Summary

This game demonstrates the importance of three key factors: central control, development, and king safety. First of all Black countered White's plan to occupy the centre by completely breaking up the proud d5-e4-f3 pawn-chain in a model way, leaving only the poor f3-pawn as a sad reminder of former ambitions. During the process described above, both sides ignored their development and after 14...♘xd5 the main determinant of success is both sides' ability to activate their kingside pieces and tuck away their king as soon as possible. Black acquired some pluses by his preceding energetic play (centralized pieces; potential dark-square play) and was the active side in the phase until move 20, with White striving for simplification and equality.

With Black's ambitious play, the tension grew and Gelfand was the first to commit a mistake: 19 ♔d1?! misplaced his king. Although Black's king also remained in the centre, he retained the right to castle and activate his rook regardless of possible losses (see not only 21...0-0!, but also some subvariations). White's 19th move deprived him of an equivalent possibility and made his king a lasting problem. Therefore 19 g3, given that it works tactically, deserved priority. However, Hertneck also erred; while 19...♗e7?! gave away chances for an advantage, 25...♕f6? was a more serious tactical oversight, failing to regain the correctly sacrificed piece. White finally developed his forces (26 ♗b5!, 27 ♖e1!) and all that was left to do was safeguard his vulnerable king. However, Gelfand returned the favour with 29 ♗c3? and the tension finally dissipated in a drawn endgame.

Game 7

Garry Kasparov – Predrag Nikolić

Horgen 1994

French Defence, Winawer Variation [C18]

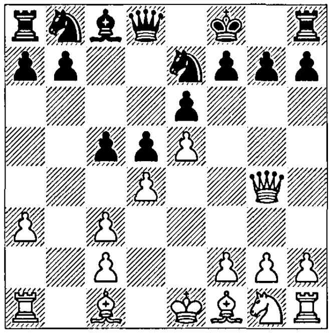
1 e4 e6
2 d4 d5
3 ♘c3

By the time of this game Kasparov's experiments with 3 exd5 were over and White's most aggressive and ambitious continuation was an integral part of his repertoire.

3 ... ♗b4
4 e5 c5
5 a3 ♗xc3+
6 bxc3 ♘e7
7 ♕g4 ♔f8!? *(D)*

Hardly anybody is currently interested in the debris of 7...♕c7 8 ♕xg7 ♖g8 9 ♕xh7 cxd4 10 ♘e2 ♘bc6 11 f4 dxc3 12 ♕d3, which works out well for White. After 7...0-0 White's most dangerous attacking attempt nowadays is 8 ♗d3 ♕a5 9 ♘e2!? cxd4 10 ♗g5 ♘bc6 11 f4. Although practical material still remains meagre, Black's king is paradoxically more threatened on the kingside than in the centre. Naturally, the main drawback of 7...♔f8 is also obvious – the h8-rook remains inactive for a long time.

W



8 h4

White has many playable moves apart from the text-move. The most common is 8 a4, while other possibilities deserving attention are 8 ♘f3 and Vitolinš's 8 dxc5!?. Nikolić remained faithful to 7...♔f8 even later on: 8 ♗d2 ♕c7 9 ♗d3 b6 10 ♘f3 ♗a6 11 dxc5 bxc5 12 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 13 c4 ♕c6 14 cxd5 exd5 15 0-0 h6 16 ♖fe1 ♕e6 17 ♕a4 ♔g8 18 ♖ab1 ♔h7 19 ♕h4 ♔g8 20 ♖b7 ♘f5 21 ♕f4 ♘b8 22 ♖eb1 ♘c6 23 c3 ♔h7 and Black extricated himself unscathed in Timman-P.Nikolić, Pula Echt 1997.

8 ... ♕c7

Black also has a choice. 8...♕a5 9 ♗d2 ♕a4 is a popular alternative: 10 ♖h3 (10 ♕d1!? cxd4 can lead to the game position) 10...♘bc6 11 h5 h6 12 ♕f4 ♗d7 13 ♖f3 ♗c8 14 ♖b1 b6 15 g4 ♕xc2 16 ♗d3 ♕a4 17 g5 c4 18 ♗e2 ♕c2 19 ♖c1 hxg5 20 ♕xg5 ♕h7 21 ♖h3 ♘g8 22 ♘f3 f6 with an unclear position, Hraček-Bobrowska, Koszalin 1999. Another alternative is 8...b6!?; for example, 9 h5 h6 10 ♖h3 ♗a6 11 ♘e2 ♕c8!?.

9 ♕d1!?

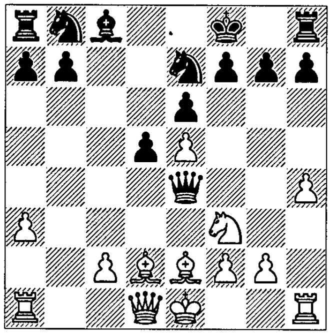
Lesser mortals would probably rather give up the pawn on c2, e.g. after 9 ♗d2, but Kasparov wants to free his forces by sacrificing his central bastion. This brave concept is not new in his practice; he came up with the idea two years earlier against Anand in a similar position.

9 ... cxd4

The most consistent, although Black doesn't have to accept the sacrifice: 9...♗d7 (9...b6!? is also interesting) 10 ♗d2 ♗a4 11 ♗d3 ♘bc6 12 ♘f3 c4 13 ♗e2 ♔e8 14 h5 h6 15 ♘h4 ♔d7 16 f4 ♖ag8 17 ♗g4 g5 18 hxg6 ♘xg6 19 ♔f2 ♘xh4 20 ♖xh4 ♕d8 gave Black sufficient counterplay in Leko-Illescas, Ubeda 1997.

10 cxd4 ♕c3+
11 ♗d2 ♕xd4
12 ♘f3 ♕e4+
13 ♗e2 *(D)*
13 ... b6

Black's best. Approximately two months later Nikolić decided to test 13...♘bc6?!. The retribution was swift: 14 h5! ♘xe5 (14...h6 15 ♖h4) 15 h6 gxh6 16 ♗xh6+ ♔g8 17 ♖b1 ♘7g6 18 ♖b4 ♘xf3+ 19 gxf3 ♕e5 20 f4 ♕c3+ 21 ♔f1 f5 22 ♖b3 ♕f6 23 c4 and Black's poorly



developed forces couldn't stop the powerful white attack in Kasparov-P.Nikolić, Paris Intel rpd 1994.

14 0-0 ♗a6
15 c4!?

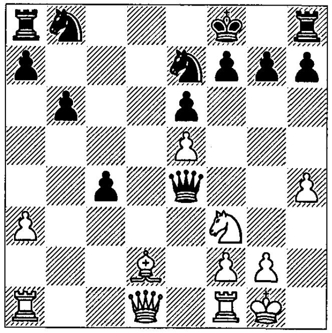
Sedate continuations such as 15 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 16 ♖e1 ♕c4 don't give White reasons for satisfaction, so energetic measures are required.

15 ... ♘bc6!?

Black doesn't show his hand and for the time being keeps the position closed.

After the weak 15...dxc4? 16 ♘g5 the only move that doesn't lose material immediately is 16...♕b7 (16...♕f5 17 ♗f3 ♘bc6 18 ♗e4! ♕xe5 19 ♗xc6 ♘xc6 20 ♕f3 costs Black a piece), but 17 ♗b4 ♘c6 18 ♗h5! gives White a very strong attack; e.g., 18...g6 (18...♘xb4 19 axb4 threatens ♘xf7, ♖xa6 and ♕a4) 19 ♕f3 ♘xe5 20 ♘xe6+ and ♕f6.

A more testing alternative is 15...♗xc4 16 ♗xc4 dxc4 *(D)* (16...♕xc4?! is playing with fire in view of 17 ♖c1 followed by ♗b4, and possibly ♖c7). Now:



1) 17 ♘g5 is a direct approach.

1a) Things works out well for White after 17...♕d5? 18 ♕h5 g6? 19 ♘xh7+ (19 ♕h6+? ♔g8 20 ♗b4 ♘bc6 21 ♖ad1 ♘f5!) 19...♖xh7 20 ♕xh7 ♕xd2 21 ♖ad1.

1b) Black should play 17...♕d3 18 ♕h5, when he has a choice between a 'safety first' continuation and a more ambitious attempt:

1b1) 18...g6 19 ♘xh7+ ♔g8 20 ♘f6+ ♔g7 21 ♗h6+!? (21 ♕g5 ♕f5 22 ♖fc1 ♘bc6, with the 'Fritzy' defensive idea 23 ♘g4 ♘d5 24 ♖xc4 ♕d3! 25 ♖xc6 ♖h5, can only be better for Black) 21...♖xh6 22 ♘e8+ is a draw, as after 22...♔f8? 23 ♕xh6+ ♔xe8 24 ♕h8+ Black would lose his queen.

1b2) Black has some chances to fight for an advantage with 18...♕f5 19 ♖ac1 (19 ♖fc1 ♘d7 20 ♖xc4 ♘d5 is very similar), and now:

1b21) After 19...b5?! 20 ♖c3 ♕g6 21 ♕d1! White avoids any ...♘d4 forks (possible after the weaker 21 ♕e2?! ♘bc6) and threatens both h5 and ♖f3. Black is in trouble, as after 21...h5 22 ♖f3 (22 a4!? a6 23 ♖a3 is also interesting) he has to give up his queen, since 22...♘f5? 23 ♖xf5! exf5 24 ♗b4+ ♔e8 25 e6 gives White a winning attack.

1b22) 19...♘d7!? 20 ♖xc4 ♘d5 looks best, when the position remains tense and unclear.

2) The calmer 17 ♗b4 ♘c6 18 ♗d6 gives White compensation, as activating his sleepy rooks will cost Black a lot of time and possibly even material.

16 ♘g5 ♕xe5

Kasparov criticizes this move, but Black's main mistake only comes later on. The other possibility, 16...♕xh4!?, is certainly worth considering. 17 cxd5 (17 g3?! ♕d4 only helps Black) 17...♗xe2 18 ♕xe2 and now:

1) 18...♘xd5 19 ♕f3 ♘d8 20 ♖fe1!? ♕a4 21 ♘xe6+ ♘xe6 22 ♕xd5 ♖d8 23 ♗b4+ doesn't look ideal; the numerous exchanges only underline the inactive h8-rook.

2) 18...exd5 is somewhat better. After 19 f4!? (not 19 e6?! ♘d4) the position is still difficult to evaluate. Black has to be careful about his queen (19...h6? 20 ♗e1) and premature activity may only entangle his pieces (19...♘f5 20 ♕d3 and now 20...♘g3? 21 ♖fe1 or 20...♘cd4 21 ♘f3!?; just as in line '1' it's not easy to activate the h8-rook once the position opens up). However, a patient approach like 19...♖d8 20 ♖ac1 also gives White compensation for the sacrificed pawns.

3) 18...♘d4 19 ♕d1 (19 ♕d3 ♘xd5 20 g3 ♕g4 gets White nowhere) 19...♘xd5 is tactically justified and probably best. Now after Kasparov's 20 ♖e1 (20 g3 is weak since after 20...♕h6, 21 ♘xf7? fails to 21...♕xd2!) White threatens ♖e4, but Black can reply 20...♘f4! 21 ♘e4 (21 ♖e4 ♘de2+! favours Black) 21...♖d8, and then:

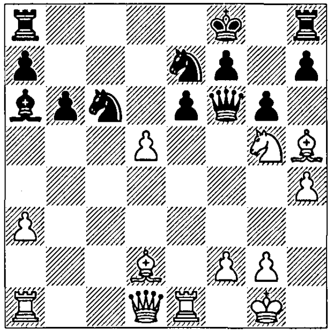
3a) 22 g3 ♕h5 and now 23 ♗xf4?! ♘f3+ 24 ♔g2 ♖xd1 25 ♖exd1 ♘xe5!? gives Black a technically won position, while Black is clearly better after 23 gxf4 ♘f3+ 24 ♔g2 ♕g4+ 25 ♘g3 ♘xe1+.

3b) After 22 ♗b4+ ♔g8 23 ♗d6 ♘f5 Black's position remains solid and White still has to find a plan to transform his initiative into something more permanent (note that after 24 g3 ♕h3! 25 gxf4? ♘h4 White loses on the spot).

17 ♖e1 ♕f6
18 ♗h5 g6

This weakening is forced, as after 18...♘g6 19 cxd5 exd5 20 ♖c1 Black can't drive back the menacing pieces, since 20...h6? fails to 21 ♘e6+ fxe6 22 ♖xc6 with a winning attack.

19 cxd5 *(D)*



19 ... exd5

19...gxh5? 20 dxc6 naturally doesn't attract Black, but 19...♘xd5 is a serious alternative. Then:

1) 20 ♖c1 is unconvincing in view of 20...♘e5!?.

2) The solid 20 ♗f3 h6 21 ♘e4 (21 ♗xd5 exd5 22 ♘f3 ♔g7 allows Black to consolidate) 21...♕xh4 22 g3 ♕d8! (22...♕e7 is weaker because after 23 ♘c3! White wins some material back and has reasonable compensation) 23 ♘c3 (23 ♕c1 ♘e5 24 ♗xh6+ ♔g8 only helps Black) 23...♘ce7 doesn't solve the main problem – Black retains his material advantage and White's compensation remains rather nebulous.

3) 20 ♗g4 is best answered by 20...♘d4 (20...♘e5 21 ♘xe6+! fxe6 22 ♗g5 forces Black to play 22...♘xg4 23 ♗xf6 ♘gxf6 24 ♖xe6; the resulting position is somewhat better for White due to Black's vulnerable king) 21 ♘e4 ♕g7 and White has nothing concrete.

4) A more refined attempt is 20 ♕a4 ♗b7 (20...gxh5 21 ♕xc6 ♔g7 22 ♘e4 gives White a lot of play on the dark squares) 21 ♗g4:

4a) 21...♘e5? again fails to 22 ♘xe6+! fxe6 23 ♗h6+ ♔f7 (23...♔g8 24 ♖xe5! ♕xe5? 25 ♕d4! leads to a quick mate) 24 ♗g5 ♘c3 (after 24...♘xg4 25 ♕d7+ Black loses a piece; 24...♕g7 25 ♖xe5 is also hopeless for Black) 25 ♕b3 ♗d5 (after 25...♘e2+ 26 ♖xe2 ♘f3+ 27 ♗xf3 ♕xa1+ 28 ♔h2 Black loses the bishop) 26 ♕xc3 ♘f3+ 27 ♕xf3, when White will emerge an exchange up in a technically won endgame.

4b) 21...♕d4 also isn't ideal; after the modest 22 ♕d1! (not 22 ♘xe6+ fxe6 23 ♗h6+ ♔e7 24 ♗g5+ ♔e8!? 25 ♖xe6+ ♔f7, when White's attack is over) Black's queen is exposed in the centre and the e6-pawn is even more vulnerable.

All this indicates that Black should pay attention to his weakest point:

4c) The radical 21...e5 weakens Black's position, and is met by 22 ♖ac1 with the idea ♘e4.

4d) 21...♘d4!? 22 ♘e4 ♕g7 is probably best. Although in comparison with line '3', White's queen is more active, it's still not clear if he has adequate compensation.

5) White's most forcing continuation is 20 ♘e4!? ♕xh4 (20...♕g7? loses to 21 ♕c1) 21 ♗h6+ ♔g8 22 g3 ♕xh5 (22...♕e7!? also deserves attention; although after 23 ♗f3 it will take Black a lot of time to get his rooks connected, White has nothing immediately decisive) 23 ♕xd5 ♕xh6 24 ♕xc6. After a series of logical moves White is three pawns down, but Black's problems with piece coordination remain unsolved:

5a) 24...♕f8 25 ♘f6+ ♔g7 26 ♕c3 is unpleasant for Black.

5b) 24...♖f8 25 ♘f6+ ♔g7 26 ♕c3 ♖c8 27 ♘h5++ ♔g8 28 ♘f6+ gives White at least a draw, as 28...♔f8 29 ♘d7+ ♔e7? 30 ♕f6+! draws Black's king out into the open.

5c) 24...♖c8 25 ♕d7 also isn't too promising for Black; if he loses both queenside pawns he might be in danger.

20 ♗g4 h6?!

Provocative and very risky. Nikolić decides to find out the knight's intentions, but as they are rather destructive, other moves must be examined:

1) 20...♔g7? is worse than the text-move in view of 21 ♘e6+! fxe6 22 ♖xe6 ♗e2 (queen moves are insufficient: 22...♕d4? 23 ♖xe7+ ♘xe7 24 ♗h6+ wins for White, while 22...♕b2 23 ♕e1 ♔f7 24 ♗c3 and 22...♕f7 23 ♗c3+ d4 24 ♗xd4+ ♘xd4 25 ♕xd4+ ♔g8 26 ♖f6 both give White a decisive attack) gives White a pleasant choice between playing for the attack with 23 ♖xe2, or winning the queen with 23 ♗h6+!? ♔xh6 24 ♕c1+.

2) 20...♖d8? also doesn't contribute greatly to the defence:

2a) 21 ♗e6 is tempting, but if Black keeps his cool with 21...♖d6! (after 21...fxe6?! 22 ♖xe6! ♕f5 23 g4 ♕d3 24 ♖e3 Black must return a whole rook to save his king: 24...♕f1+ 25 ♕xf1 ♗xf1 26 ♘e6+), he has every chance to beat off the attack after both 22 ♗xf7 h6 and 22 ♘xf7 ♖xe6 23 ♖xe6 ♕xe6!? 24 ♘xh8 ♕f6.

2b) 21 ♘e6+! fxe6 22 ♖xe6 is thematic and much stronger:

2b1) 22...♕f7 23 ♗h6+ ♔g8 (after 23...♔e8? 24 ♕a4 ♗c8 25 ♕xc6+ ♗d7 26 ♖xe7+ ♕xe7 27 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7 28 ♗g5 the attack nets White more material) 24 ♖c1 ♗b7 25 ♕e1 is very dangerous for Black, since compared with the game he has even more problems with his rook trapped in the corner.

2b2) 22...♕g7 23 ♕f3+ ♘f5 (23...♔g8 24 ♖xc6! ♕xa1+ 25 ♖c1 ♕e5 26 ♖e1 leaves Black defenceless; he must give up his queen since 26...♖f8 loses on the spot to 27 ♖xe5 ♖xf3 28 ♖xe7!; 23...♔e8 is better, although after 24 ♖ae1 White has a raging attack) 24 ♖ae1 ♗b5 (24...♘cd4? 25 ♗b4+ ♔g8 26 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 27 ♖xe8+ ♔f7 28 ♖e7+ ♔f6 29 ♕xd5! wins for White, as 29...♘xe7 30 ♕g5+ leads to mate) 25 ♗xf5 ♘d4 26 ♕c3! ♘xf5 (26...♘xe6? 27 ♗h6) 27 ♕b4+ and White regains the piece with a continuing attack.

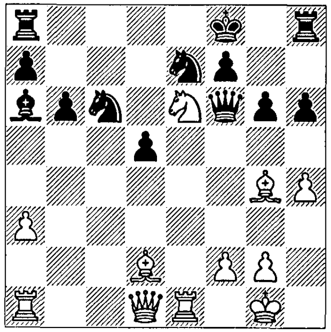
3) Black should have covered the sensitive e6-square with 20...♗c8!. After 21 ♖c1:

3a) 21...♗xg4 22 ♕xg4 suits White; e.g., 22...h6 23 ♘f3 ♘f5? 24 ♕a4! or 22...♘f5 23 ♘e6+!? with compensation.

3b) Better is 21...h6!? and as 22 ♗c3 d4 23 ♘e4 ♗xg4 24 ♕xg4 ♕f5 just costs White more material, he still has to justify his sacrificial concept.

21 ♘e6+! *(D)*

B



21 ... fxe6

Forced. 21...♔g8 is bad due to 22 ♘c7.

22 ♖xe6 ♕f7

Does Black really have to concede the long diagonal? 22...♕b2? 23 ♕f3+ and ♗c3 is simple, but 22...♕g7!? needs to be considered. Now 23 ♕f3+ ♔g8 24 ♗c3 d4 25 ♖xe7 ♘xe7! 26 ♕xa8+ ♔h7 27 ♕xa7 dxc3 28 ♕xa6 c2 leads to a draw at most for White. A more dangerous try is 23 ♖c1 ♗b7 (23...♘d4 loses immediately to 24 ♖xe7!) 24 ♗b4!? ♘xb4 25 ♖c7 ♘bc6 26 ♖xb7 with a strong attack.

23 ♕a4?!

23 ♗c3? d4 24 ♗xd4 ♖d8 is a dead end for White, but Kasparov proposed the very dangerous alternative 23 ♖c1!?. White's last inactive piece joins the fray; the following lines originate partly from Kasparov:

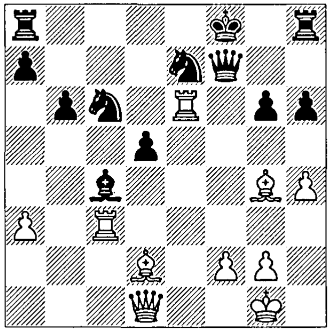
1) We already know about 23...♘d4? 24 ♖xe7!. One of Black's problems is that if White achieves a more normal material balance without substantial simplification, his attack will in all probability be decisive.

2) After 23...♗c8 24 ♖exc6 ♘xc6 25 ♖xc6 ♗xg4 26 ♕xg4 ♕f5 (26...♔g7? loses quickly due to 27 h5! g5 28 ♗c3+ ♔h7 29 ♖f6) White doesn't have to continue attacking with speculative moves such as 27 ♕d4 or 27 ♕g3, but can reach a promising rook endgame by 27 ♗xh6+!? ♖xh6 (Black can't afford 27...♔f7? 28 ♖c7+ ♔e6 29 ♕a4!) 28 ♕xf5+ gxf5 29 ♖xh6 ♔e7 30 ♔f1.

3) More resilient is 23...h5 24 ♖cxc6! (24 ♗h3?! ♗c8 25 ♖exc6 ♘xc6 26 ♖xc6 ♗xh3 27 gxh3 ♔g7 isn't clear any more) 24...♘xc6 (not 24...hxg4? losing on the spot to 25 ♗b4) 25 ♖xc6 hxg4 26 ♗c3. Here White wins Black's queen after 26...♖xh4 (26...♔g8 27 ♖f6 and 26...♕d7 27 ♕a4! d4 28 ♗b4+ ♔e8 29 ♖e6+ are worse) 27 ♖f6 and his forces continue the attack via the weakened dark squares (typical for the Winawer!); e.g., 27...♕xf6 28 ♗xf6 ♖h5 29 ♕xg4 ♖e8 30 ♗c3! ♔f7 31 ♕d4.

4) However, the most natural continuation is 23...♗c4 24 ♖c3 *(D)* (in his book *Gambits*, Burgess proposes 24 ♖xc4!? dxc4 25 ♕a1, winning Black's queen for two rooks; this deserves serious consideration, although the position after 25...♖h7!? 26 ♖f6 ♖d8 is far from clear and it's not easy to decide if this is objectively more promising for White than line '4b2') and now:

B



4a) 24...♘d4?! is not ideal in view of 25 ♗xh6+ ♖xh6 26 ♕xd4:

4a1) 26...♔g8?! 27 ♖f3 ♕g7 (a nice sample line is 27...♕e8? 28 ♖ee3! ♔h7 29 ♕f6 ♘g8 30 ♖xe8 ♘xf6 31 ♖xa8 ♘xg4 32 ♖f7#) 28 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 29 ♖xe7+ ♔h8 30 g3 and the endgame is tough for Black.

4a2) Stronger is the generous 26...♖xh4!? 27 ♖f6 ♘f5, but even here after 28 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 29 ♕d1 White is the only one with winning chances.

4b) Cleverer is 24...h5!? 25 ♗h3 (25 ♖f3 hxg4 26 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 27 ♕xg4 is rather speculative) 25...♘d4:

4b1) 26 ♖xe7?! ♕xe7 (Black can't survive 26...♔xe7? 27 ♖xc4! dxc4 28 ♗b4+ ♔d8 29 ♕xd4+ ♔c7 30 ♕e5+ ♔b7 31 ♗e6) 27 ♖xc4 (after 27 ♖e3 ♘e2+! 28 ♔h1 ♕xh4 29 ♗b4+ ♔g7 there is nothing decisive in sight for White) 27...dxc4 28 ♗b4 ♕xb4 29 axb4 ♖d8 is very good for Black; he should be able to consolidate and convert his material advantage into victory.

4b2) Therefore just as above White should play 26 ♗h6+ ♖xh6 27 ♕xd4. However, here with the extra pawn on the board Black can afford 27...♔g8 (27...♕g7 is a possible transposition) 28 ♖f3 (28 ♖f6 ♕g7 29 ♗e6+ ♔h8 gets White nowhere) 28...♕g7! 29 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 30 ♖xe7+ ♔h8 31 ♖ff7 (31 ♖f6!?) 31...d4 and a draw is the most probable result.

The conclusion seems to be that even after the tricky move 23 ♖c1!? Black can hold his own.

23 ... ♗c4

Nikolić returns part of the booty. Black would have no joy out of his extra piece after 23...♗c8 24 ♖xc6 ♗xg4 (after 24...♘xc6 25 ♕xc6 ♗b7 26 ♕d6+ ♔g7 27 ♗e6 Black loses on the spot) 25 ♖c7, when the e7-knight can't escape all the pins (♗b4, ♖e1). More to the point is 23...♗b7 24 ♖ae1 (24 ♗c3? d4 25 ♗xd4 again runs into 25...b5! 26 ♕d1 ♖d8), but even here White has strong pressure; curbing all his attacking ambitions (♖1e3, ♗b4) is not going to be easy and the position stays unclear.

24 ♖xc6 ♘xc6

Not 24...b5? 25 ♕b4.

25 ♕xc6 ♖e8

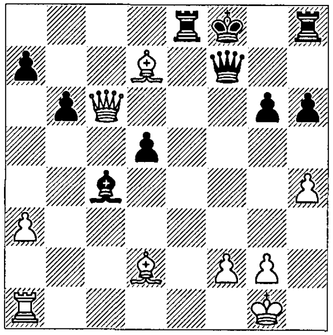
25...♖d8? is substantially weaker in view of 26 ♖e1; a plausible line is then 26...♖e8 27 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 28 ♕f6+ ♔g8 29 ♗e6+ ♔h7 30 ♗f7 ♕e4 31 ♗xh6! with mate.

26 ♗d7 *(D)*

26 ... ♔g7

Another crucial moment. Black is understandably intent on tucking his king away, but White will still be able to create dangerous

B



threats. The rook can't leave the back rank, but 26...♖d8!? is possible:

1) The point is 27 ♗e6 ♗b5!. After 28 ♕xb5 (28 ♕c3 d4 29 ♕b3 ♕f6 is similar) 28...♕xe6 29 ♖e1 ♕d7 30 ♗b4+ ♔g8 White's compensation is insufficient.

2) Better is 27 ♗b4+ ♔g7 28 ♗c3+ (28 ♗e6?! ♗b5 29 ♕xb5 ♕xe6 30 ♖e1 ♕c8 31 ♖e7+ ♔g8 leaves White struggling) 28...♔h7 29 ♗e6, when Black can choose between:

2a) 29...♕e7 30 ♖e1 ♖d6 31 ♕a4!? b5 32 ♕b4 (32 ♗g8+ ♔xg8 33 ♖xe7 bxa4 34 ♖e8+ ♔f7 35 ♖xh8 is also roughly equal) 32...♕d8 33 ♕c5 ♕b6 34 ♕xb6 axb6 35 ♗xd5! ♗xd5 36 ♖e7+ ♗f7!? with a draw.

2b) Safer is 29...♗b5!? 30 ♗xf7 (30 ♕xb5 is weaker in view of 30...♕xe6) 30...♗xc6 31 ♗xh8 ♖xh8 32 ♖c1 and again a draw is the logical result.

27 ♗c3+ ♔h7
28 h5!

Kasparov ignores Black's rooks and attacks with his usual energy.

28 ... ♖hf8

Logical. 28...gxh5? is impossible due to 29 ♗f5+! ♕xf5 (or 29...♔g8 30 ♗g6) 30 ♕c7+, while 28...♖d8? 29 ♗e6 is also curtains. However, 28...♖e7 seems playable: 29 ♗xh8 gxh5 (29...♔xh8!? 30 hxg6 ♕f4 is also worth consideration) 30 ♗h3 ♔xh8 31 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 32 ♖d1 ♖e2 and Black has counterplay.

29 hxg6+

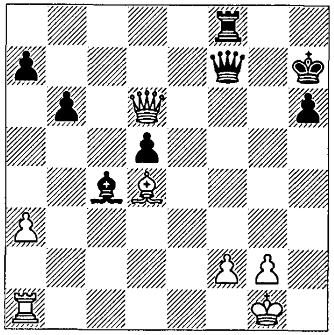
Kasparov ambitiously spurns the perpetual after 29 ♗xe8 ♕xf2+; objectively he isn't risking too much.

29 ... ♕xg6
30 ♗xe8 ♕xe8

It's important not to allow White's rook to join the attack; therefore 30...♖xe8 is weaker due to 31 ♕d7+ ♔g8 32 ♖d1.

31 ♕d6 ♕f7
32 ♗d4 *(D)*

B

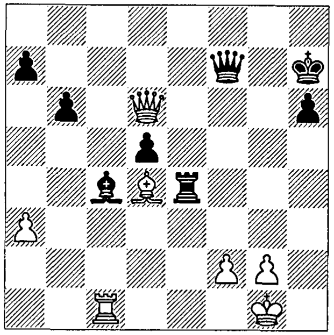


The smoke has cleared for a while. Black has beaten off the first wave of the attack, but his weak king and the opposite-coloured bishops still complicate his defensive task. Moreover, Nikolić was already very short of time.

32 ... ♖e8
33 ♖c1 ♖e4?! *(D)*

Kasparov rightly points out the more prudent 33...♖e6, when it is difficult for White to avoid repetition after 34 ♕b8 ♖e8.

W



34 ♗e5 ♖g4?

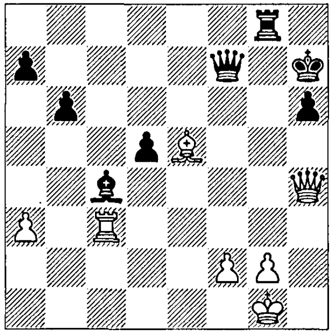
However, this mistake is much more serious, and probably decisive. The right move was 34...♖e2! 35 f4 (White must also expose his king, because 35 ♗g3 ♕e7 leads only to further exchanges) 35...♕g6 36 ♕c7+ ♔g8 37 ♕b8+ ♔f7 38 ♕xa7+ ♔f8 39 ♕b8+ ♔e7 40 ♕c7+ ♔e8 41 ♕c8+ ♔e7 42 g4 ♕e6!? 43 ♕c7+ ♔e8 44 ♕g7 d4 and with White's rook still unable to penetrate, a draw seems a fair result.

35 ♖c3 ♖g6?!

This is the final inaccuracy, which loses practically by force. However, even after the considerably stronger 35...h5!? 36 ♖h3 (36 ♕d8 ♖g8 37 ♖f3 ♕g7!? gives White nothing) White has managed to activate his rook and retains a strong initiative; e.g., 36...♗e2 37 ♖e3 ♗c4 (37...♗f3? 38 ♖c3! ♖xg2+ 39 ♔f1 ♗e4 40 ♗g3! cuts off Black's rook; 37...♖g6 38 ♕d8 ♖g8 39 ♕h4 ♖g4 40 ♕h3 ♗d1 41 ♖c3 is also dangerous for Black) 38 f3 (38 ♗f4?! ♕xf4 39 ♖e7+ ♔h8 only leads to a draw, but 38 ♗c3 ♖e4 39 ♖h3!? is a possible alternative) 38...♖g6 39 ♕d8 ♖g8 40 ♕h4.

36 ♕d8 ♖g8
37 ♕h4 *(D)*

B



Now Kasparov has coordinated his pieces and Black is helpless against the dark-square concert. White's intention is 38 ♖f3! ♕e8 (38...♕xf3? 39 ♕e7+) 39 ♗c3, followed by an effective rook invasion with ♖e3-e7.

37 ... ♖g5

37...♕e6 is also insufficient due to 38 ♖e3, while 37...♖g6 is hardly any better: 38 ♖f3 ♕e6 39 ♗c3 ♕e2 40 ♔h2!.

38 f4 ♖h5

38...♕h5 39 ♕xh5! ♖xh5 40 ♖g3 leads to a tragicomic situation; Black will end up at least an exchange down. 38...♖g6 also loses, to 39 f5! ♖g8 (39...♕xf5? 40 ♕e7+ ♔g8 41 ♕e8+ mates) 40 ♖h3. Somewhat more resilient is 38...♖g8!? 39 ♖h3 h5 (39...♕f8 40 ♗d4 leaves Black defenceless against the plan of f5 followed by ♖e3-e7), but the united passed pawns will decide even the endgame after 40 g4!?; an attempt to blockade them with 40...♗e2 fails to 41 ♕xh5+ ♕xh5 42 ♖xh5+ ♔g6 43 f5+ ♔f7 44 ♖h7+ ♔e8 45 f6! ♖g6 46 ♖e7+ ♔f8 47 ♖xa7.

39 ♕d8 1-0

Now Nikolić lost on time, but this is only another form of capitulation, as there is no defence to the threatened ♖g3, and 39...♖xe5 40 fxe5 ♕f1+ 41 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 42 ♖g3 also doesn't help.

Summary

This was a double-edged game, typical of Kasparov's inimitable style. The opening promised a complicated struggle, with Black's vulnerable dark squares balanced by White's wrecked pawn-structure and the closed nature of the position. Although, for example, Fischer has considered the Winawer to be fundamentally incorrect, upholding this verdict is no mean task and usually Black tends to hold his own. Even the provocative 7...♔f8!? has its logic – Black avoids creating any further weaknesses or opening the position for White's bishop-pair (practice has shown that after 7...0-0 Black is sooner or later forced to play the otherwise undesirable ...f5).

Kasparov reacted very aggressively and proceeded to sacrifice his whole pawn-centre to get at Black's king. Undoubtedly he also took into account two important practical considerations. Firstly, from move 15 onwards, Black is very often faced with multiple choices. One can notice that until move 26 we usually analyse only possible and often quite tempting alternatives for Black. White, on the other hand, makes natural attacking moves with the notable exception of 23 ♕a4?!. While conducting an intuitive attack, one should try to engage as many pieces as possible in the onslaught, so it is no surprise that the variations prove 23 ♖c1!? was better. Kasparov's second consideration was most probably even more subjective – his massive personal score against Nikolić. Sure enough, although Black managed to master the complications of the middlegame quite well, his insecurity led to serious time-trouble and finally to his downfall in a rather simple position.

Game 8

Anatoly Karpov – Valery Salov

Sicilian theme tournament, Buenos Aires 1994

Sicilian Defence, Richter-Rauzer Attack [B66]

1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3 ♘c6
3 d4 cxd4
4 ♘xd4 ♘f6
5 ♘c3 d6
6 ♗g5 e6
7 ♕d2 a6

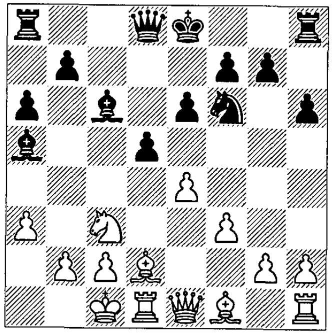
The Rauzer has a lot of subvariations; for 7...♗e7 8 0-0-0 0-0 see Game 2.

8 0-0-0 h6
9 ♗f4

The risky sacrifice 9 ♗h4?! ♘xe4 10 ♕f4 ♘g5 has disappeared from the scene, but a popular alternative is 9 ♗e3, aiming for a kingside pawn-storm. The text-move is more centrally oriented, as the bishop blocks the advance of the f-pawn.

9 ... ♗d7
10 ♘xc6 ♗xc6
11 f3 d5
12 ♕e1 ♗b4
13 a3 ♗a5
14 ♗d2 *(D)*

This was definitely the main move in the early 1990s, but now attention is again gradually shifting to the older and unclear queen sacrifice 14 exd5 ♘xd5 (14...♗xd5 is weaker, because 15 ♗e5! practically forces Black to take on c3) 15 b4 ♘xf4 16 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 17 h4!?.



14 ... ♖c8!?

After this sound Sicilian move, the current game shows that the tactics also work well for Black and enable him to equalize. If Black wants to play this line, he must always be ready to meet the e5 advance, creating a French type of position. The problem is to achieve it under the best possible circumstances. A popular alternative is 14...♕e7 15 e5 ♘d7 16 ♔b1. Here the threat of ♘xd5 forces Black to waste a tempo, but after 16...♗c7 (16...♗b6 17 f4 h5 18 ♗e3 gives Black a rather passive version of the 'French' structure) 17 f4 f6 18 exf6 gxf6!? and ...0-0-0 the situation remains murky enough. The most straightforward method is, however, 14...d4 15 e5 ♕c7! 16 ♘e2 ♗xd2+ 17 ♕xd2 ♕xe5 18 ♘xd4 0-0! 19 ♘xc6 bxc6 20 ♕d4 ♕c7 21 ♕d6 ♕b6 22 ♕e5 ♖fd8 23 ♗c4 a5, when Black has nothing to fear, Kotronias-Atalik, Karditsa 1994.

15 ♕g3

This has been recommended by Wolff (the originator of 14...♖c8!?). The alternatives are:

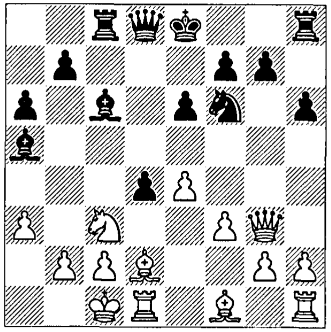
1) Black gets a very comfortable position after 15 ♔b1?! dxe4 16 fxe4 (outright bad is 16 ♗xh6? ♘d7! 17 ♗xg7 ♖g8; Black needn't worry about 16 ♘b5 ♗xd2 17 ♖xd2 ♗d5 18 c4 axb5 19 cxd5 exd5 20 ♗xb5+ ♔f8 either, Canfell-Speck, Melbourne 1998) 16...♕e7.

2) The unambitious 15 exd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘xd5 ♗xd2+ 17 ♖xd2 ♗xd5 18 ♗d3 0-0 leads to sterile equality.

3) That leaves only 15 e5 ♘d7 16 ♕g3 (16 ♔b1 0-0 is OK for Black; compared with the line 14...♕e7 15 e5 ♘d7 16 ♔b1 his pieces are better placed) 16...♕c7!? 17 ♕xg7 ♕xe5, Castañeda-Yermolinsky, Chicago 1995. White has achieved nothing, as 18 ♗xh6? ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♖xh6! 20 ♕xh6 ♕xc3 would give Black a powerful attack.

15 ... d4! *(D)*

This consistent move takes the sting out of White's idea. Weaker is 15...♗c7 16 e5 ♘d7 17 ♖e1! (17 f4 0-0 is less clear), when, in the game Svidler-Makarov, Novosibirsk 1995, Black was forced to choose between weakening his kingside or giving up castling rights.



16 ♗e3!?

A novelty. The alternatives are unpromising:

1) 16 ♘e2? ♗a4 and now:

1a) 17 ♗c3?! ♗xc3 (just weeks before our game White was successful after 17...♕b6? 18 ♖xd4 ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♗b5 20 ♕xg7 ♔e7 21 ♘f4! in Svidler-Greenfeld, Tilburg 1994) 18 ♘xc3 ♗xc2! 19 ♔xc2 ♕b6 gives Black a clear advantage, as 20 ♕xg7 ♔e7 only makes matters worse for White.

However, White doesn't even have a route to equality:

1b) 17 ♕xg7 ♖xc2+ 18 ♔b1 ♔e7! will lead to positions we analyse below; e.g., 19 ♗xa5 ♕xa5 is line '1c22'.

1c) 17 ♗xa5 ♖xc2+ 18 ♔b1 ♕xa5 and then:

1c1) 19 ♘xd4 ♖c8! (19...♖xb2+ 20 ♔xb2 ♗xd1 21 ♗b5+! axb5 22 ♕b8+ is equal) 20 b3 (20 ♕xg7 ♔e7 21 ♗c4 ♖hg8 22 ♘f5+ ♕xf5 23 ♕xg8 ♘xg8 leaves White a piece down) 20...0-0!? gives Black a raging attack; White's forces are misplaced.

1c2) 19 ♕xg7 and now:

1c21) 19...♕b5?! and here:

1c211) 20 ♕xh8+? ♔e7 21 b4 d3! (21...♕c4 22 ♕d8+! ♔xd8 23 ♖xd4+ ♕xd4 24 ♘xd4 ♖d2 25 ♘e2 ♗b5 26 ♔c1!? looks drawish) 22 ♘f4 (22 ♘d4 ♕c4) 22...♕e5! (Black must protect his knight to avoid a perpetual after 22...♕c4? 23 ♘g6+ fxg6 24 ♕g7+ ♔e8 25 ♕xg6+) 23 ♘g6+ (23 ♘xd3 ♕c3) 23...fxg6 24 ♕g7+ ♔e8 and after the checks end, White will be mated.

1c212) 20 b4! ♖g8! (20...♔e7? 21 ♘xd4) 21 ♘xd4 (otherwise ...♕c4 wins) 21...♕e5 22 ♕xh6 and although Black's attack is clearly dangerous, perhaps it's not decisive.

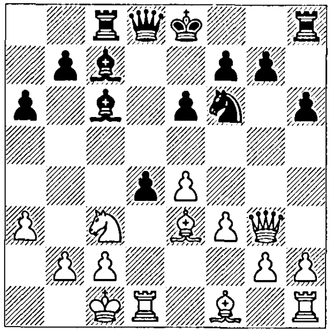
1c22) This indicates the refined solution 19...♔e7!!. As now 20 b4 (20 ♘f4 ♖xb2+! 21 ♔xb2 ♕c3+ and 20 ♖xd4 ♕e1+ 21 ♔a2 ♖xb2+! 22 ♔xb2 ♖c8 both lead to mate) enables Black to play 20...♕c7, White has only a choice between one of the unsatisfactory lines above; 20 ♕xh8 ♕b5 is line '1c211'.

2) After 16 ♕xg7 ♖g8! (16...♖h7? 17 ♕g3) 17 ♕xh6 dxc3 18 ♗xc3 ♘d7 Black's active pieces are worth more than White's three extra pawns.

3) 16 ♘a2 is better, but also not unduly worrying: 16...♗a4 (16...♗c7 17 e5 ♕d5 18 ♘b4 favours White) 17 ♗d3 (17 ♗xa5 ♕xa5 18 ♘b4?! ♘h5 19 ♕h4 ♕g5+! 20 ♕xg5 hxg5 is good for Black due to the threats ...♘g3 and ...a5) 17...♗xd2+ 18 ♖xd2 0-0 and with the knight misplaced on a2, only Black can hope for an advantage.

16 ... ♗c7! *(D)*

A clear-cut solution. Instead, 16...♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♕e7 18 ♗xd4 (18 cxd4? ♕xa3+ 19 ♔d2 ♗xe4!) 18...0-0 (after 18...♕xa3+?! 19 ♔d2 the d4-bishop rules supreme and Black will have problems castling; e.g., 19...♘h5 20 ♕e5 ♘f6 21 ♗d3) 19 ♔b2 gives White chances for an advantage.



17 f4?!

This aggressive try is a step in the wrong direction. If Black manages to consolidate by ...e5, his attacking prospects will be preferable, so White must act. The exchange sacrifice 17

♖xd4 ♗xg3 18 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 19 hxg3 hardly promises sufficient compensation, but such desperate measures are not yet necessary. Best is the natural 17 e5 ♘h5:

1) 18 ♕g4 ♗xe5 and now 19 ♕xh5? ♕f6 and 19 f4? ♗f6! (19...♘f6 is less convincing in view of 20 ♕e2 ♘d7 21 fxe5 dxc3 22 ♕g4) 20 ♕xh5 ♕c7 21 ♗xd4 ♕xf4+ 22 ♔b1 ♗xd4 23 ♘e2 ♕e5 are both bad for White. That leaves only 19 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 20 ♖xd4 ♕g5+ with a pleasant endgame for Black.

2) More prudent is the modest 18 ♕f2 ♗xe5 19 ♗xd4 with equality.

17 ... ♘h5!

The key move. Black will exchange his brave d-pawn for White's f4-pawn and get the better pawn-structure.

18 ♕g4

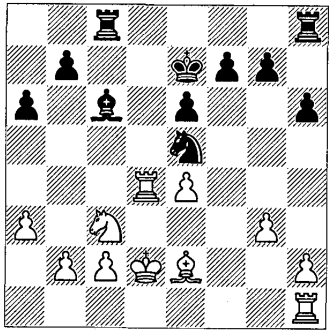
18 ♕f2 is met by 18...♕f6.

18 ... ♕f6
19 ♖xd4

White resigns himself to a prolonged fight for a draw. However, the same goes for 19 ♗xd4 ♕xf4+ 20 ♕xf4 ♗xf4+ 21 ♔b1 ♘f6 or 19 e5 ♕f5! (19...♕g6?! 20 ♕xg6 fxg6 21 ♖xd4 ♗b6 22 ♖d3 ♗xe3+ 23 ♖xe3 ♘xf4 24 ♖g1 and g3 is only equal at best for Black) 20 ♕xf5 exf5 21 ♖xd4 ♗b6 22 ♖d3 ♗xe3+ 23 ♖xe3 ♘xf4.

19 ... ♗xf4
20 ♗xf4 ♕xf4+
21 ♕xf4 ♘xf4
22 g3 ♘g6
23 ♔d2 ♘e5
24 ♗e2 ♔e7 *(D)*

W



The theoretical duel is over and Black can be more than satisfied. He has a pleasant endgame with an unassailable knight on e5 and a more compact pawn-structure. However, converting such an edge into victory is another matter. Karpov is deservedly famous for his defensive technique. That he doesn't live up to his reputation in this game is caused by the fact that Salov himself plays endgames superlatively.

25 ♔e3

25 h4 g5 would probably only transpose, as 26 hxg5?! hxg5 hands over the h-file to Black.

25 ... g5
26 h4?!

This only creates a new target. White should have behaved more modestly, possibly delaying this move until Black plays ...h5 himself.

26 ... ♖cg8
27 hxg5 ♖xg5

Now 27...hxg5 28 ♖dd1 doesn't promise Black much.

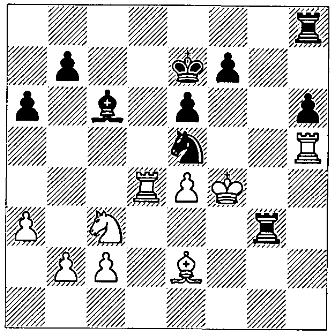
28 ♖h5?

Karpov obviously relied on this move to force an exchange of rooks, but it's a tactical oversight. 28 ♖h3 ♖hg8 (28...h5!?) 29 ♔f2 ♖8g6, with ideas like ...♘d7-f6 and ...♖e5, is also unpleasant for White, but after the text-move he loses material.

28 ... ♖xg3+
29 ♔f4 *(D)*

29 ♔f2 is met by 29...♖g5.

B



29 ... ♖g1?

29...♖hg8? is insufficient in view of 30 ♖xe5 f6 31 ♖xe6+ ♔xe6 32 ♗c4+. After the text-move Black remains a pawn up, but much stronger was 29...♖g5! 30 ♖xg5 (30 ♖xh6 ♖xh6 31 ♔xg5 ♖h3! is the same) 30...hxg5+ 31 ♔xg5 (31 ♔xe5?? f6#) 31...f6+ 32 ♔f4 ♖h3!. White's king is suddenly in trouble, as there is no effective defence against ...♗d7 with threats such as ...♖g6 (or ...♘d3) and ...e5#.

30 ♘d5+!

After the naïve 30 ♖(♔)xe5? f6(+) and ...e5+ the extra exchange and the passed h-pawn decide.

30 ... ♗xd5

30...exd5? 31 ♖xe5+ and exd5 is advantageous for White.

31 exd5 ♘g6+

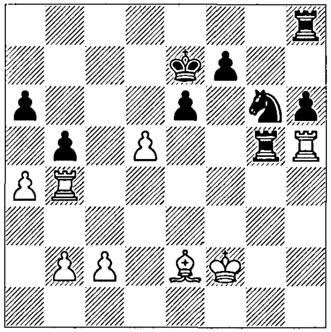
31...f6!?, with the idea 32 ♖b4 b5 33 a4 ♖hg8!, is a possible improvement.

32 ♔e3 ♖g3+

After 32...e5 33 ♖b4 b5 34 a4 ♔d6!? 35 axb5 ♘f4 36 bxa6 ♘xh5 37 ♗xh5 White's counterplay shouldn't be underestimated.

33 ♔f2 ♖g5
34 ♖b4 b5
35 a4 *(D)*

B



35 ... ♖c8!?

Black is doing his best. 35...bxa4 is weaker due to 36 dxe6 followed by ♖xa4. Also after 35...exd5 36 axb5 axb5 37 ♖xb5 ♘f4 38 ♖h4!? ♖g2+ 39 ♔f3 White is very close to saving the game; Black can at most hope to achieve a theoretically drawn rook endgame with extra f- and h-pawns.

36 axb5 axb5
37 dxe6!

37 ♖xb5?! ♖xc2 and 37 c3 ♖xh5 38 ♗xh5 ♖c5! are considerably weaker for White.

37 ... ♖xh5

Now 37...♖xc2 38 ♖xg5 hxg5 39 exf7! ♘f4 40 ♖xb5 ♖xe2+ 41 ♔f3 ♖g2 42 ♖f5 leads to an immediate draw.

38 ♗xh5 ♖xc2+
39 ♔e3 ♖c5!?

Stronger than 39...♔xe6 40 ♖xb5.

40 ♗e2 ♖e5+

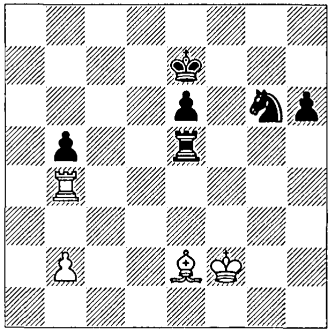
40...fxe6 also doesn't promise much since after 41 ♖xb5, if Black avoids exchanging the rooks, White will play ♖h5.

41 ♔f2

41 ♖e4 is more straightforward.

41 ... fxe6 *(D)*

W



42 ♗xb5?!

The first inexplicable moment. After precise defence from move 30 onwards, White spurns the logical 42 ♖xb5, which practically forces the rooks off the board. Somewhat later Black himself avoids the exchange; his reasoning is pretty clear: in a pure bishop vs knight endgame each of White's pieces takes care of one of Black's pawns, and as the b-pawn will divert one of Black's pieces, there will be nothing left to win with.

42 ... ♔f6
43 ♗d3 h5
44 ♖e4

44 ♖b5 ♘f4! enables Black to avoid exchanges, but 44 ♗xg6!? also gives White fair drawing chances.

44 ... ♖c5!
45 ♔e3?!

In this phase of the game Karpov wasn't at his best. White still has good drawing chances, but a series of inaccuracies lets Black ideally coordinate his pieces and pawns. For example, why not 45 b4 ♖c3 46 ♗e2 instead? Then 46...h4 allows 47 ♗h5 and after other moves the b-pawn also gives White counterplay.

45 ... ♖g5
46 ♔f2 ♖f5+
47 ♔e3 ♖g5
48 ♔f2 ♖f5+
49 ♔e3 ♘e7!
50 ♖h4

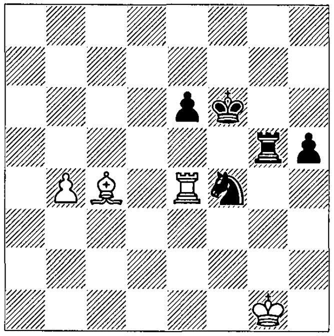
Now 50 ♗c4 ♘d5+ 51 ♗xd5 exd5 increases Black's winning chances.

50 ... ♖e5+
51 ♔f2 ♖d5
52 ♗c4

Also here 52 ♗e2! was a more logical continuation.

52 ... ♖f5+
53 ♔g1 ♖g5+
54 ♔f2 ♖f5+
55 ♔g1 ♘g6
56 ♖e4 ♘f4
57 b4 ♖g5+ *(D)*

W



58 ♔f1?

This is the losing mistake, since now the h-pawn becomes dangerous. 58 ♔h1 was necessary.

58 ... e5
59 ♗a6

After 59 b5 h4 60 b6 h3 Black's passed pawn is too fast.

59 ... ♖g3?!

After achieving substantial progress, Black falters. This thematic move transfers the rook behind the b-pawn, but 59...h4 was simpler. After 60 ♗c8 (60 ♖c4 h3 61 ♖c2 ♖g3 gives White no time for 62 ♖b2? in view of 62...♖a3) even the worst-case scenario with 60...h3?! 61 ♖xf4+ exf4 62 ♗xh3 ♖b5 leads to a study-like win, as demonstrated by Centurini in 1865.

60 ♖c4 ♖b3
61 b5 h4
62 ♖c6+ ♔g5

62...♔f5?! is weaker in view of 63 b6:

1) 63...h3 64 ♔g1! (64 b7 h2 65 ♖h6 ♘h3! 66 ♔g2 ♖b2+ 67 ♔h1 ♘f2+) 64...♖b1+ 65 ♔h2 ♖b2+ 66 ♔h1 and the possibility ♗c8+ disrupts Black's plans.

2) 63...♖b1+ 64 ♔f2 h3 and now:

2a) 65 ♗c8+? ♔g5 66 ♔g3 ♖b2! 67 b7 h2 68 ♖c1 (68 b8♕ ♘h5+) 68...♖g2+ 69 ♔f3 ♖g1 70 ♖xg1+ hxg1♕ with mate.

2b) However, the problem is 65 b7 with the point that 65...h2 is met by 66 ♖h6.

63 b6

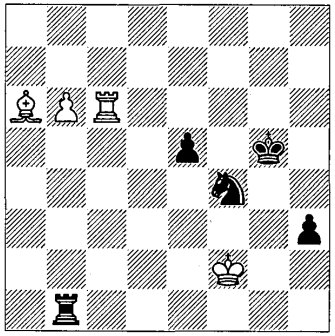
63 ♔g1 ♔g4! 64 ♖c8 (64 b6 ♔g3 65 ♗f1 h3) 64...e4 makes it easier for Black.

63 ... ♖b1+?

All of a sudden the endgame has become full of tactics and this very natural move in fact misses an admittedly very difficult win: 63...h3! 64 ♔g1 ♖b1+ (64...♔g4 65 ♔h2! ♖b2+ 66 ♔h1 h2 67 b7 ♘h5 68 ♖g6+ disrupts the mating-net) 65 ♔h2 ♖b2+ 66 ♔h1 (the only move; both 66 ♔g1? h2+ 67 ♔h1 ♘h5 and 66 ♔g3? h2 67 ♖c1 ♖g2+ lose at once for White) 66...♘h5 67 ♖c3 ♖xb6 (67...h2 is insufficient due to 68 b7! ♔f4 69 b8♕) 68 ♗c8 ♖b1+! (after 68...♘f4 69 ♖e3 Black will lose one of his pawns) 69 ♔h2 ♖b2+ 70 ♔h1 (70 ♔xh3? ♘f4+) 70...h2 71 ♖h3 ♖c2 and, as both pawns remain alive, Black should win after overcoming the technical obstacles. A possible pretty line is 72 ♗a6?! ♔g4! 73 ♖xh2 ♖c1+ 74 ♔g2 ♘f4+ 75 ♔f2 ♖c2+ 76 ♔g1 ♘h3+ 77 ♔h1 ♖c1+ 78 ♔g2 ♖g1#.

64 ♔f2 h3 *(D)*

W



65 ♔g3?

This loses immediately, just when a draw was again within White's reach. Salov himself indicates the devilish trick 65 b7! h2 66 ♖c1!. Now:

1) 66...♖xc1 67 b8♕ and then:

1a) 67...♖c2+ 68 ♔e3 ♘d5+ 69 ♔d3 ♖c3+ 70 ♔d2 h1♕ 71 ♕xe5+ ♔g6 72 ♗d3+ ♔f7 73 ♕f5+ ♔e7 74 ♕e5+ ♔d7 75 ♗b5+ ♔c8 76 ♗a6+ ♔d8 77 ♕d6+ ♔e8 78 ♕e5+ is a draw, as Black can't interpose his knight.

1b) The immediate 67...h1♕ is more testing:

1b1) The tempting 68 ♕xe5+? ♔g4 69 ♕g7+ (69 ♗c8+? ♖xc8 70 ♕g7+ ♔f5 71 ♕d7+ ♔e5 72 ♕xc8 ♕g2+) 69...♔f5 (after 69...♔h4 70 ♕f6+ ♔h5? 71 ♕f5+ White draws immediately; the king must go to the other flank) 70 ♕f8+ ♔e5 71 ♕b8+ ♔e6! (71...♔e4 72 ♕b4+ forces the king to return) is insufficient for White. Black's king will gradually hide from the checks and taking the f4-knight at any moment allows Black to unleash a decisive attack of his own; e.g., 72 ♕e8+ (72 ♕xf4 ♕g1+ 73 ♔f3 ♖c3+ 74 ♔e2 ♖c2+ 75 ♔d3 ♕d1+ 76 ♔e4 ♕d5+ 77 ♔e3 ♕d2+ 78 ♔e4 ♕b4+! and Black wins by force) 72...♔d6 73 ♕d8+ ♔c6 74 ♕f6+ ♔c5 and again 75 ♕xf4 fails to 75...♕g1+ 76 ♔f3 ♖c3+ 77 ♔e4 (77 ♔e2 ♖c2+ 78 ♔d3 ♕d1+ 79 ♔e4 ♕d4+) 77...♕h1+ 78 ♔e5 ♕d5+ 79 ♔f6 ♖f3.

In line '1b1' Black's king has been able to escape pursuit via the e5-square. It follows that Black's pawn must stay alive...

1b2) The right way to save the game is therefore 68 ♕d8+! ♔f5 (the king can't hide on the kingside; 68...♔g4 69 ♗c8+ and 68...♔g6 69 ♕e8+ ♔f6 70 ♕d8+ both lead to the main line) 69 ♕d7+! (White can't allow an effective interposition or let the king cross the centre to the queenside; after 69 ♗c8+? ♖xc8 70 ♕xc8+ ♘e6 White loses trivially and 69 ♕f8+ is also insufficient: 69...♔e4! 70 ♕b4+ ♔d5 71 ♗b7+ ♖c6) 69...♔f6 (here the interposition 69...♘e6 70 ♕f7+ ♔g5 71 ♕e7+ only eases White's task) 70 ♕d8+ ♔e6 (70...♔f7 71 ♕d7+) 71 ♗c8+ ♖xc8 (otherwise Black can't make progress; 71...♔f7 72 ♕d7+ ♔f8 73 ♕d8+ ♔g7 74 ♕e7+ draws) 72 ♕xc8+ ♔d6 (72...♔e7 73 ♕c7+ ♔f6 74 ♕d8+) 73 ♕d8+ ♔c5 74 ♕a5+! ♔c4 (74...♔d4 75 ♕b4+ ♔d3 76 ♕xf4!) 75 ♕a4+ ♔c3 76 ♕a3+ ♔d2 77 ♕b4+ (77 ♕b2+ ♔d3 78 ♕b3+ ♔e4 79 ♕c4+ ♔f5 80 ♕f7+ ♔g5 81 ♕e7+ ♔g6 82 ♕e8+ is also possible) 77...♔c2 78 ♕c4+. Now Black's king either stays trapped on the queenside, or he must allow the stalemate after 78...♔d2 79 ♕xf4+ exf4.

2) A line such as 66...♖b2+ 67 ♔g3 ♖g2+ (67...♔f5 68 ♖h1) 68 ♔f3 ♖g1 69 ♖xg1+ hxg1♕ 70 b8♕ gives Black practical chances at most.

65 ... ♖g1+
66 ♔h2 ♖g2+
67 ♔h1 ♘h5!
0-1

Summary

The opening needs some explanation. Since 1985 Karpov has practically stopped playing 1 e4, but in this theme tournament the Open Sicilian was mandatory. To be successful in the sharpest lines requires, apart from meticulous preparation, also a good feeling for the tactical and strategic nuances, something that tends to deteriorate without constant practice in the given opening. After 14 ♗d2 Black's task is to resolve the central tension without unnecessary concessions, such as getting a weak isolated d5-pawn, or allowing an unfavourable central blockade with White playing e5. Salov's superlative reaction, probably prepared at home, is typically Sicilian – a sharp tactical solution of strategic problems. Due to the misguided 17 f4?! Black won the theoretical duel hands-down.

But this was only the beginning of the fight. When patient defence was required, Karpov, probably depressed by the course of the game, lashed out (26 h4?!). This sinned against the principle not to play on the flank where you are weaker and he crowned this with a miscalculation (28 ♖h5?). Salov missed a relatively simple win (29...♖g5!) and the game then entered its third phase. When defending an endgame with a material disadvantage one should try to exchange as many pawns as possible and avoid piece exchanges. However, this rule is certainly not universally valid; after considerably simplifying the position White should have consistently proceeded with 41 ♖e4 or 42 ♖xb5. After this the roles changed: Black kept the pieces on the board and continued to torture White. In practice the defender's unrewarding task is complicated by exhaustion and sure enough, Salov finally triumphed after further mutual mistakes.

Game 9

Jan Timman – Veselin Topalov

Olympiad, Moscow 1994

King's Indian Defence, Sämisch Variation [E87]

1 c4 ♘f6
2 ♘c3 g6
3 e4 d6
4 d4 ♗g7
5 f3 0-0
6 ♗e3 e5

In the 1990s this classical move experienced a revival, especially due to Kasparov's efforts.

7 d5

White can also keep the tension in the centre with a balanced position after 7 ♘ge2 c6 8 ♕d2 ♘bd7 9 0-0-0 a6 10 ♔b1 b5.

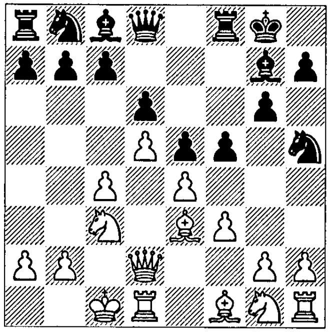
7 ... ♘h5

7...c6 is more popular. Then one possibility is 8 ♗d3 cxd5 9 cxd5 ♘h5 10 ♘ge2 f5 11 exf5 gxf5 12 0-0 ♘d7 with sharp and complex play.

8 ♕d2 f5

It's hard not to mention here Bronstein's original idea (although its inventor first played it in 1956 in a slightly different position, with ...♘a6 instead of ...0-0): 8...♕h4+!? 9 g3 ♘xg3 10 ♕f2 ♘xf1 11 ♕xh4 ♘xe3 12 ♔e2 ♘xc4. Black has two bishops and two pawns for the queen, and with his solid and flexible pawn-structure, Black's counterchances shouldn't be underestimated.

9 0-0-0 *(D)*



9 ... a6!?

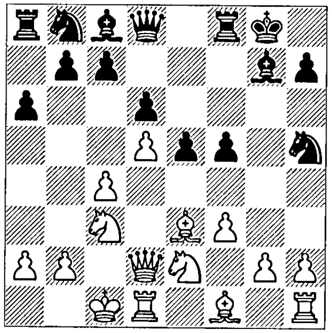
The older and straightforward 9...f4 10 ♗f2 ♗f6 11 ♘ge2 ♗h4 12 ♗g1 has lost most of its appeal. In keeping with modern tendencies, Black chooses a flexible move to mask his plans. However, 9...♘d7 is played more often.

10 exf5

Timman is the first to make a radical change in the character of the position. As we have already said, it's more popular to delay such decisions. Therefore White usually prefers 10 ♔b1 or 10 ♗d3. Here we can find traces of K-K: 10...c5!? 11 dxc6! ♘xc6 12 ♘d5 ♗e6 13 ♗b6 ♕d7 14 ♘e2 ♖ac8 15 ♔b1 ♕f7 16 ♖he1 ♔h8 (16...♘f6!?) was played in Karpov-Kasparov, New York/Lyons Wch (21) 1990; then 17 ♘g3! would have given White an advantage.

10 ... gxf5
11 ♘ge2 *(D)*

We are gradually entering relatively virgin territory, with the few relevant examples often being some 30-40 years old. White's plan is to exert pressure against the central pawns, either forcing some weakening concession, or himself breaking up the 'hanging' duo with g4. 11 ♔b1 is a possible alternative, but the most logical is 11 ♗d3. Timman chose this move himself in 1967 (!) against Wibe and won quickly, so we can only guess why he decided to play differently. The otherwise typical sacrifice 11...e4?! 12 fxe4 f4 13 ♗f2 ♘d7 14 ♘f3 ♘e5 15 ♗e2 doesn't seem sufficient here, as the dark-square blockade is far from tight. Black should look for alternatives, such as 11...b5!? or the more restrained 11...c5 with unclear play. A more recent game is also interesting: 11 ♘h3!? ♘d7 12 ♔b1 ♖b8 13 ♖g1 e4 14 g4 fxg4 15 fxg4 ♘hf6 16 ♗e2 ♘e5 17 ♘f2 ♘f3 18 ♗xf3 exf3 19 ♗h6 ♕e8 20 ♗xg7 ♕g6+ 21 ♔a1 ♕xg7 22 ♘ce4 and White went on to win this complicated position in Vyzhmanavin-Zakharevich, St Petersburg 1996.



11 ... b5!

This brave move involves a pawn sacrifice. Botvinnik showed that 11...♘d7 12 ♘g3! (12 g4 fxg4 13 fxg4 ♘f4 14 ♘xf4 exf4 15 ♗xf4 ♘e5 16 ♗e2 also gives White an edge) 12...♘df6 13 ♗d3!? (even more energetic than 13 ♔b1 ♕e8 14 ♗d3, Botvinnik-Tal, Moscow Wch (21) 1961) 13...f4 14 ♘xh5 fxe3 15 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 16 ♕c2 ♕h6 17 ♘e4! is advantageous for White, Botvinnik-Medina, Tel-Aviv OL 1964.

12 ♘g3 ♘f6

Black naturally won't open a file against his own king with 12...♘xg3? 13 hxg3. Botvinnik's manoeuvre is not so effective if Black's other knight doesn't get in the way on f6.

13 ♗g5 b4

This move is recommended by *ECO*. Black must respect the threat of ♘h5, as 13...bxc4?! 14 ♘h5 ♗h8 15 g4! gives White a dangerous attack. However, it's difficult to choose between the text-move and 13...♕e8!? 14 cxb5 axb5 15 ♗xb5 ♕g6 16 ♗d3 ♘a6. Even here Black has compensation and, after all, compared with the game he has an extra open file against White's king.

14 ♘b1

Although b1 is not an ideal square for the knight, 14 ♘ce2 hems in the f1-bishop. This was played in the only available predecessor of our game, Shamkovich-Gufeld, Leningrad 1967, which continued 14...♕e8 15 ♕xb4 ♕g6 (15...h6!?) 16 ♕d2 ♘bd7 17 ♘c3 ♖b8 18 ♗d3 ♘c5 19 ♗c2 ♗d7 20 ♗e3 ♖b4 21 ♘ce4 ♖xc4 22 ♘xc5 dxc5 23 ♕d3 ♖xc2+ 24 ♕xc2 f4 25 ♕xg6 hxg6 26 ♗xc5 fxg3 27 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 28 hxg3 and White was better.

14 ... ♕e8

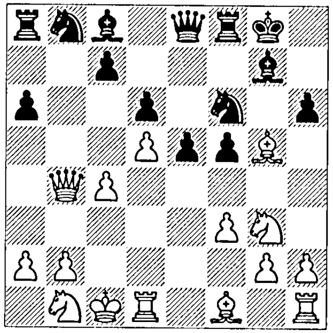
14...a5? 15 ♗d3 spells positional disaster for Black.

15 ♕xb4

The consistent move. After 15 ♗d3?! ♕g6 White doesn't have any extra material or even a clear plan. On the other hand Black's follow-up is obvious: ...a5, ...♘a6-c5, etc.

15 ... h6 *(D)*

15...♕g6 16 ♕d2 h6 17 ♗h4 h5 18 ♕a5! ♗h6+ 19 ♘d2 doesn't promise Black any tangible compensation, so Black wisely doesn't commit his queen.



16 ♗d2?!

Timman logically wants to keep his important bishop, but this retreat robs White's queen of the most natural square, and soon enough it will feel a lack of breathing space on the queenside. Therefore better was 16 ♗h4! a5 17 ♕d2 ♘a6 18 ♘c3, when the temporarily wayward bishop can soon be reactivated via f2. In this case White's chances seem preferable; after the text-move Black gets real play.

16 ... a5
17 ♕a3

After 17 ♕c3 White has to reckon not only with 17...e4 but also with 17...c6!, when Black's initiative is fully worth a pawn.

17 ... ♘a6
18 ♘c3

Taking the pawn would be really reckless: 18 ♕xa5?! (18 ♗xa5 ♘c5 is only slightly better) 18...♗d7 (the direct 18...f4!? 19 ♘e4 ♘xe4 20 fxe4 ♗g4 21 ♖e1 ♘c5 also deserves attention) 19 ♕c3 ♘c5 is very dangerous for White.

18 ... ♗d7
19 ♗d3 ♕g6
20 ♗b1

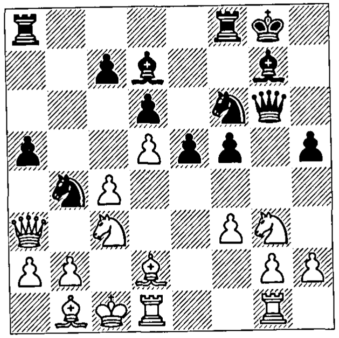
The sortie 20 ♘b5 is best countered by 20...♖fc8!? (the impetuous 20...e4?! is still premature due to 21 ♗b1 ♘b4 22 ♘c3!) with a similar position to that in the game.

20 ... ♘b4
21 ♖hg1!

White wants to get counterchances by preparing g4. After the immediate 21 ♘ge2?! Black can afford even 21...♕xg2 22 ♖dg1 ♕xf3 23 ♗xh6 ♖f7 as the white queen is in no position to mate, while the united central passed pawns are ready to march on. Conceding the dark squares with 21 ♘b5 ♖fc8 (after 21...♘fxd5? 22 cxd5 ♗xb5 23 ♘xf5! ♖xf5 24 ♗xb4 Black's position falls apart) 22 ♗xb4 is too risky due to 22...axb4 23 ♕xb4 h5!. Although this exchange became mandatory in the game at move 26, White need not have let this happen.

21 ... h5!? *(D)*

White was hoping for something along the lines of 21...♖fc8 22 ♘ge2 c6 23 g4, when he would get play against Black's king. Therefore this prophylaxis.



22 ♘ge2

An interesting alternative is 22 ♘f1, by which White re-routes his knight to put f5 under maximum pressure. Then:

1) The direct 22...c6 23 g4!? (23 dxc6 ♗xc6 24 ♘e3 e4 is not very clear) 23...cxd5 24 ♘e3! is rather murky, but risky for Black; for example, 24...hxg4 25 fxg4 d4 26 ♘xf5 ♕f7 27 ♗h6.

2) Better is the restrained 22...♕f7 23 ♘e3 f4 24 ♘f5 (24 ♘f1?! is too passive in view of 24...c6), and now:

2a) 24...♘fxd5?! and then:

2a1) 25 ♘xd5 should not be answered by 25...♘xd5?, because 26 ♘xg7 ♘b6 27 ♘xh5 ♕xh5 (27...♘xc4 28 ♕d3 ♘xd2 loses to 29 ♘f6+!) 28 ♗e4 is hopeless for Black. Instead, Black should play 25...♗xf5! 26 ♗xf5, transposing to line '2b2'.

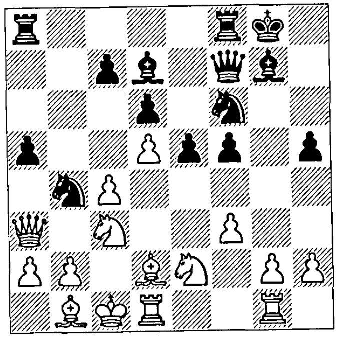
2a2) Stronger is 25 ♘xg7 ♘b6 26 b3! ♔xg7 27 g3, when White's attack is powerful even without his queen.

2b) Thus Black should sacrifice an exchange with 24...♗xf5! 25 ♗xf5 ♘fxd5:

2b1) 26 ♗e4 ♘b6 27 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 (but not 27...♘xc4?, allowing 28 ♕xb4! axb4 29 ♗d5) and White's pathetically placed queen means that Black has more than sufficient compensation; e.g., 28 b3 ♘d3+ 29 ♔c2 ♘c5!?.

2b2) White's best is to refrain from material gain; he should be somewhat better after 26 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 27 cxd5! (27 ♗e4 ♘b6 28 ♗xa8 ♘xc4, followed by ...♖xa8, gives Black an impressive central pawn-chain) 27...♕xf5 28 g4.

22 ... ♕f7 *(D)*



23 ♘g3?

We have reached the critical moment of the game. Timman probably didn't like his position too much, so he repeats moves. However, Black already has greater ambitions and the knight will be misplaced on g3. White had better options:

1) The slow 23 h3 c6 24 dxc6 ♗xc6 25 ♗xf5 ♕xc4 26 ♕b3 ♕xb3 27 axb3 d5 is rather unclear.

2) The sharp 23 g4! is more interesting. Then 23...hxg4 (23...fxg4 gives White the extra possibility {apart from 24 fxg4} of 24 ♖df1!?) 24 fxg4 fxg4!? (Black can't play 24...♘xg4? due to 25 h3 ♘f6 26 ♗h6 ♘e8 27 ♖xg7+ ♘xg7 28 ♖g1; 24...f4?! can be met by 25 g5 or even 25 ♘e4!?, finally activating White's passive queen) seems best, but after 25 ♘g3 or 25 ♖df1 White takes over the initiative.

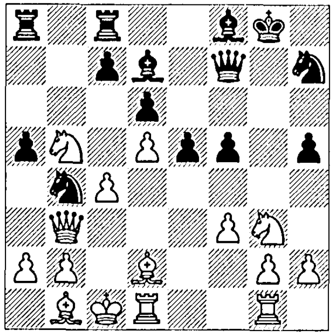
23 ... ♘h7
24 ♘b5

Now after 24 ♘ge2 c6! White lacks an important tempo.

24 ... ♖fc8
25 ♕b3

White finally wants to chase away the nagging knight. 25 ♗xb4 axb4 26 ♕xb4 ♗h6+ 27 ♔c2 ♗e3 hands over all the dark squares to Black.

25 ... ♗f8! *(D)*



The final preparations.

26 a3?!

Now White loses more or less by force. The last chance was the unappealing aforementioned line 26 ♗xb4 axb4 27 ♕xb4 (27 ♗d3 c6 28 dxc6 ♖xc6 gives Black a raging attack), as after the wild 27...c6? 28 ♘xd6 ♕f6 29 ♗xf5!? ♗xd6 30 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 31 ♘e4 ♕f4+ 32 ♕d2 White would have too many pawns for the piece.

26 ... c6
27 ♘c3

Other moves are no better:

1) 27 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 28 axb4 cxd5 is disgusting for White.

2) The same goes for 27 axb4 cxb5 28 bxa5 ♖xc4+ 29 ♗c3 ♗h6+ 30 ♔c2 ♘f6.

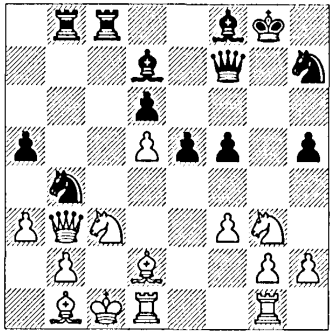
3) 27 dxc6 is refuted by the energetic line 27...♖xc6! (27...♗xc6? 28 ♘xd6! ♗xd6 29 ♘xf5) 28 ♘c3 (28 axb4 ♖xc4+ 29 ♗c3 axb4! with the deadly threat ...♖xc3+) 28...♖xc4, when Black has a winning position as 29 ♘xf5? fails to 29...♗xf5 30 ♗xf5 ♖xc3+!.

27 ... cxd5
28 cxd5

After 28 axb4 axb4! (28...dxc4?! 29 ♕c2! axb4 30 ♘xf5 bxc3 31 ♗xc3 would still give White fighting chances) 29 ♕xb4 d4 Black wins the piece back with an unstoppable attack.

28 ... ♖ab8! *(D)*

28...♘xd5? 29 ♗xf5! helps White.



29 axb4

Forced. White pays dearly for his misplaced queen.

29 ... axb4
30 ♕c2 bxc3
31 bxc3

31 ♗xc3 is answered by 31...♗h6+.

31 ... ♖c4
32 ♕d3

White's queenside is ruined and the game is decided. 32 ♘xf5? loses at once, to 32...♖xb1+.

32 ... ♖a4
33 ♗e3

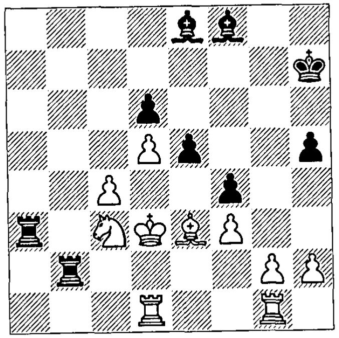
The threat was ...♖a1. Now Black wraps the game up with a few simple but effective moves.

33 ... f4
34 ♕xh7+ ♕xh7
35 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7
36 ♘e4 ♖a1+!

Quicker than 36...♖xe4 37 fxe4 fxe3.

37 ♔d2 ♖b2+
38 ♔d3 ♗b5+

39 c4 ♖a3+
40 ♘c3 ♗e8! *(D)*



The final blow. Now both defences against mate cost a piece: 41 ♗d2 ♗g6+ 42 ♔e2 ♖xc3 or 41 ♖d2 ♖bb3.

0-1

Summary

After White perhaps unnecessarily resolved the central tension with 10 exf5 an interesting position arose. Although Black's pawn-centre was imposing, compared with the typical situation with hanging pawns (i.e. c5 and d5) his king was much more vulnerable. Therefore any premature advance of the e5-f5 duo would not only have allowed White a comfortable blockade, but also given him good attacking prospects. This consideration was so significant that Black even gladly sacrificed a pawn to keep his pawns mobile. This is in general characteristic for Topalov: he is more often than not willing to invest material for the initiative.

It's not easy to give a clear verdict on the merits of the sacrifice, so let's concentrate on the two most important moments in the course of the game. "If one piece is bad, the whole position is bad" – this piece of wisdom certainly comes nearer to the truth if the incriminated piece is the queen. Therefore White should have preferred the temporary misplacement of his bishop (16 ♗h4!). As a consequence of 17 ♕a3, Black's attack on the queenside was directed against both White's king and (!) queen. Just when Topalov's play was making definite progress, Timman faltered again (23 ♘g3?) by losing precious time in a tense situation with kings on opposite sides of the board. On the other hand, Black's performance must be highly commended; especially impressive is the cool prophylaxis (21...h5!?) and preparation (25...♗f8!) followed by the final crescendo. Note that while attacking, Topalov was in no hurry to restore material equality; even in the final position White is still a pawn up!

Game 10

Alexei Shirov – Jeroen Piket

Match (game 4), Aruba 1995

Queen's Gambit Declined, Semi-Slav Defence [D44]

1 d4 d5
2 c4 c6
3 ♘c3 ♘f6
4 ♘f3 e6
5 ♗g5 dxc4!?

The Botvinnik System is a rare phenomenon in current theory. A majority of the antiquated tactical lines haven't survived the concentrated onslaught of analysts and lately computers, but this variation, although it started appearing in practice nearly 60 years ago, still avoids direct refutation. This is due to the enormous complexity and richness of the arising positions. For example, both opponents have even after our game continued to use the Botvinnik with both colours. Just a final remark – this move-order makes it difficult for Black to avoid a sharp struggle anyway, since after 5...h6 White has lately often been opting for 6 ♗h4!? dxc4 7 e4 g5 8 ♗g3 b5 9 ♗e2 with a strong centre and good compensation for the pawn.

6 e4 b5
7 e5 h6
8 ♗h4 g5
9 ♘xg5 hxg5
10 ♗xg5 ♘bd7

11 exf6

11 g3 ♗b7 often only transposes; the immediate capture has the advantage of avoiding the possible sideline 11...♖g8!?.

11 ... ♗b7
12 g3 c5

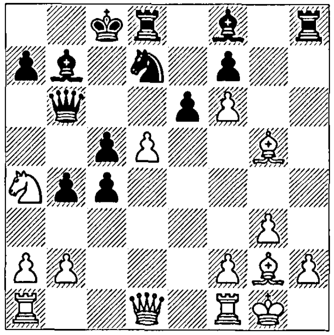
After 12...♕b6 13 ♗g2 0-0-0 14 0-0 Botvinnik's original intention 14...♘e5?! hasn't survived the test of time, since White's compensation after 15 dxe5! ♖xd1 16 ♖axd1 has simply proved too much to cope with. Altogether in the Botvinnik, White quite often sacrifices his queen, sometimes even for less material. Besides the current game, notable examples are Kamsky-Kramnik, New York PCA Ct (1) 1994, and Ivanchuk-Shirov, Wijk aan Zee 1996. Later Piket himself took up the interesting 14...♗h6!? 15 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 16 ♘e4 c5.

13 d5 ♕b6

The main move. An alternative is 13...♗h6 14 ♗xh6 ♖xh6 15 ♕d2 ♕xf6, when White's best chance to fight for an advantage is probably 16 ♘e4!?. It's impossible to cover all the theoretical ramifications in this game; for the reader with a deeper interest, *The Botvinnik Semi-Slav* by Steffen Pedersen may be recommended.

14 ♗g2 0-0-0
15 0-0 b4
16 ♘a4 *(D)*

Uhlmann's 16 ♖b1!? was successfully revived by Kasparov in 1994. Black then finds it difficult to achieve full equality after 16...♕a6 17 dxe6 ♗xg2 18 e7 ♗xf1 19 ♔xf1!, as he must give back all his extra material.



16 ... ♕d6?!

This rare move afterwards got only one more outing at top level. Let's look at some recent examples with the main alternatives:

1) 16...♕b5 17 a3 exd5 18 axb4 d4 19 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 20 ♖e1 (20 ♘c3!? is White's main attempt) 20...cxb4 21 ♕xd4 ♕xg5 22 ♕xc4 was played in Filippov-Wang Lei, Shanghai 2000. After Lutz's recommendation 22...♖c8! 23 ♕xf7 ♖c7 Black has little to worry about.

2) 16...♕a6 17 a3 (17 dxe6 ♕xe6 transposes to the main game) 17...♗xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♘e5 19 axb4 ♖xd5 20 ♕e2 cxb4 21 ♘c3 ♖a5 22 ♖xa5 ♕xa5 23 ♘e4 ♘d3 24 ♗e3!? (new; the older 24 b3 ♕e5 25 ♖d1 ♕b2! is satisfactory for Black) was Beliavsky-Atalik, Yugoslav Cht (Vrnjačka Banja) 1999. Beliavsky maintains that after 24...♕h5 25 f3 a5 the position remains unclear.

17 dxe6

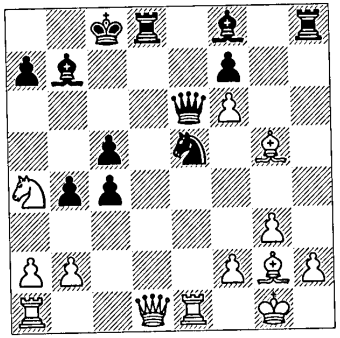
It's difficult to criticize such a natural move; moreover, it had been played previously and White had won convincingly. However, after the current game, attention shifted to 17 ♗f4!, when Black has two moves:

1) 17...♕a6 18 dxe6 ♘xf6!? (the weaker 18...♗xg2 19 e7 ♗xf1? 20 ♕d5 shows the positive effect of the bishop's position on f4, compared with the aforementioned 16 ♖b1!? line) 19 ♗xb7+ ♕xb7 20 ♕e2 ♗d6 21 ♕xc4 (21 ♗xd6? ♖xh2!) 21...♗xf4 (after 21...♖xh2 22 f3 ♗xf4 23 ♔xh2!? ♖d2+ 24 ♔h1 Black has no tangible compensation) 22 ♘xc5! ♕c6 23 ♕xf4 ♖xh2 24 ♘e4 ♘xe4 (24...♖dh8 25 ♖ac1) 25 ♔xh2 (25 ♖ac1? ♘c5) 25...♖h8+ 26 ♔g2 ♘xg3+ 27 f3! ♘xf1 28 ♖c1 ♖h2+ 29 ♔g1 ♖c2 30 ♖xc2 ♕xc2 31 exf7 and again White triumphs.

2) The more sedate 17...e5 18 ♗e3 ♗h6 19 ♕c1 ♗xe3 20 ♕xe3 ♗a6 21 a3 ♔b8 22 h4 ♖dg8 23 ♘xc5! ♘xc5 24 axb4 gave White a decisive attack in Kramnik-Ivanchuk, Novgorod 1996. After this game, 16...♕d6?! disappeared from the scene.

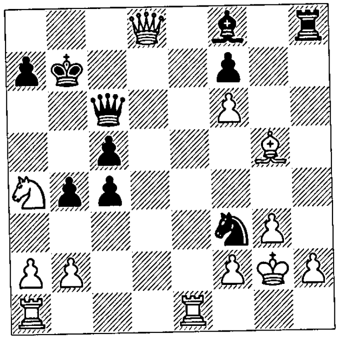
17 ... ♕xe6
18 ♖e1 ♘e5! *(D)*

This surprising novelty was Piket's idea. It's also undoubtedly the best move, since 18...♕f5 19 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 20 ♗f4! (20 h4 ♗h6! 21 ♗xh6 ♘e5 is less clear) 20...♕xf6 (20...♕d3 21 ♖e3!) 21 ♖e8! ♗g7 22 ♖xh8 ♗xh8 23 ♕d5+ ♕c6 24 ♘xc5+ gave White a won position in the game G.Agzamov-Timoshchenko, Pavlodar 1982.



19 ♕xd8+!

Ambitious as ever, Shirov sacrifices his queen instead of taking a rook. However, unravelling the wild complications shows his intuition didn't let him down. 19 ♗xb7+ ♔xb7 20 ♕xd8 (stopping halfway doesn't promise anything: 20 ♕e2 ♕h3! 21 ♕xe5 {21 ♕e4+?! ♔a6 22 ♕g2 ♕xg2+ 23 ♔xg2 ♘d3 leads to a typical position in which the powerful centralized d3-knight and poorly placed a4-knight more than compensate for White's extra pawn} 21...♕xh2+ 22 ♔f1 ♕h3+ 23 ♔e2 ♕g4+ gives Black at least a perpetual, as 24 ♔f1 is forced) 20...♘f3+ 21 ♔g2 ♕c6! *(D)* (21...♘xe1+? 22 ♖xe1 ♕xe1 23 ♕d7+ ♔a6 24 ♕c6+ ♔a5 25 ♗f4! mates; after 25...♖xh2+ Black has only a few checks) brings us to the critical position.



White is a rook up, but three of his pieces are *en prise* and his king is under attack:

1) 22 ♘xc5+? loses to 22...♗xc5 23 ♕xh8 ♘xe1++ 24 ♔f1 ♕f3.

2) 22 ♖e7+ ♗xe7 and now:

2a) After 23 ♕xe7+ ♔a8 (23...♔a6? is weak due to 24 ♕e4!) it's White who must find a way to make a draw:

2a1) 24 ♕xc5 ♖xh2+ 25 ♔f1 ♖h1+ 26 ♔e2 ♕xc5 27 ♘xc5 ♘d4+ 28 ♔e3 ♘f5+! (28...♘c2+ 29 ♔d2 ♘xa1 is also possible, but less clear) 29 ♔f4 ♖xa1 30 ♔xf5 ♖xa2 and Black should win, as 31 ♗c1 ♖a5 32 ♗e3 c3! 33 bxc3 b3 decides immediately.

2a2) The accurate 24 ♗h6! is necessary. After 24...♘xh2+ 25 ♔g1 ♘f3+ (25...♘g4? 26 ♖d1) 26 ♔f1 ♘d4 27 ♔g1 ♕xa4 28 ♕xf7 ♕c6 29 ♕g7 Black has at most a perpetual check.

2b) An easier way to achieve a repetition is 23 ♕xh8 ♘xg5+ 24 ♔g1 ♘f3+ (24...♗xf6?! 25 ♘xc5+ ♔c7 26 ♕h6 only makes matters difficult for Black) 25 ♔f1 ♘d4.

3) 22 ♖e8!? is an ambitious attempt:

3a) 22...♘d4+ (or 22...♘d2+) doesn't work in view of 23 f3!.

3b) The materialistic 22...♘xg5+ is insufficient. 23 ♔f1 and now:

3b1) 23...♕h1+ 24 ♔e2 ♕f3+ 25 ♔e1 ♕h1+ 26 ♔d2 ♘e4+ (26...♘f3+ 27 ♔c2 ♘d4+ 28 ♕xd4 ♕xa1 29 ♕d7+ mates) 27 ♔c2 b3+ 28 axb3 cxb3+ 29 ♔xb3 ♕f3+ 30 ♔a2 and the checks end.

3b2) 23...♕xa4 24 ♖d1 and White's counterattack decides; e.g., 24...♔a6 25 ♕c8+ ♔a5 26 ♖d7.

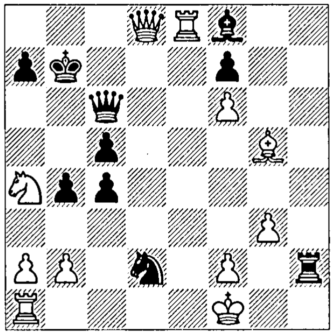
3c) 22...♘xh2+ 23 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 24 ♔f1 ♖h1+ (24...♘h2+ 25 ♔e2 ♕f3+ 26 ♔e1 ♕h1+ 27 ♔d2 ♘f3+ 28 ♔e3) 25 ♔e2 ♘d4+ 26 ♔d2 is not enough for Black:

3c1) 26...♕xa4 27 ♕d5+! (27 ♖xh1? ♕c2+ 28 ♔e1 ♕b1+ 29 ♔d2 ♕d3+ leads to mate; 27 ♕c8+ ♔b6 is only a draw) 27...♔a6 28 ♕xc4+ and ♖xh1 wins.

3c2) 26...♖xa1 27 ♕a8+ and White will be a piece up.

3d) The correct solution is 22...♖xh2+! 23 ♔f1 ♘d2+! *(D)* (23...♖h1+? 24 ♔e2 transposes to line '3c'), when White can either take or ignore the rude knight:

3d1) 24 ♕xd2?! even exposes White to some risk: 24...♕g2+! (24...♖h1+ 25 ♔e2 ♕xe8+ 26 ♗e3 ♖xa1 27 ♕d5+ gives White sufficient counterchances; Black's king is too weak) 25 ♔e2 ♕xf2+ 26 ♔d1 ♕f3+ 27 ♔c1! (27 ♖e2? ♖h1+ 28 ♔c2 b3+ mates; 27 ♔c2?! also isn't good as it allows 27...♖xd2+ 28 ♗xd2 b3+ with tempo and after 29 axb3 cxb3+ 30 ♔c1 the ambitious 30...c4! leaves White's forces in a terrible tangle) 27...♖xd2 28 ♗xd2 and now Black has a guaranteed draw (28...♕c6 29 ♖xf8 ♕h1+ 30 ♔c2 ♕e4+) and can possibly aspire for more with 28...♗d6!?.



3d2) 24 ♗xd2 ♕g2+ 25 ♔e2 ♕xf2+ 26 ♔d1 ♕f3+ 27 ♔c1 ♖h1+ 28 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 29 ♗xe1 ♗h6+ 30 ♗d2 ♕f1+ 31 ♔c2 ♕f5+ 32 ♔d1 ♕f1+ is a nice draw, as 33 ♗e1? ♕f3+ 34 ♔c2 b3+ mates.

3d3) 24 ♔e1 ♘f3+ (24...♕h1+? 25 ♔xd2 ♖xf2+ 26 ♖e2) and now:

3d31) 25 ♔e2 ♘d4+ 26 ♔d2 ♖xf2+ 27 ♔e1 ♕h1+ (or 27...♖f1+) again leads to a perpetual.

3d32) 25 ♔d1 ♕xa4+! (25...♖h1+? 26 ♔e2 again transposes to line '3c') 26 b3 cxb3 and here it's White who should give the perpetual.

4) After the paradoxical 22 ♔f1!? Black again faces a wide choice:

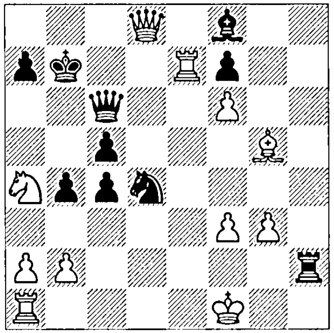
4a) 22...♘xg5? 23 ♖e8 transposes to line '3b'.

4b) 22...♖xh2 23 ♗e3!? ♘xe1 24 ♖xe1 ♕f3 25 ♕d7+ ♔a6 26 ♘xc5+ ♗xc5 27 ♕c8+ ♔b6 28 ♕xc5+ ♔b7 29 ♕b5+ ♔c8 30 ♕xc4+ ♔d8 31 ♕d4+ and the rook joins in decisively.

4c) 22...♘xh2+ 23 ♔e2 ♕f3+ 24 ♔d2 ♕xf2+ 25 ♔d1 and White remains a rook up.

4d) 22...♘d4! 23 f3 ♖xh2 24 ♖e7+ *(D)* (after 24 ♖e4? ♘e6! Black wins back material with a continuing attack) and now:

4d1) 24...♗xe7? 25 ♕xe7+ ♔a6 26 ♘xc5+ ♔b5 (26...♔a5 27 ♘b3+!) 27 a4+ bxa3 28 ♖xa3 covers f3 and wins.

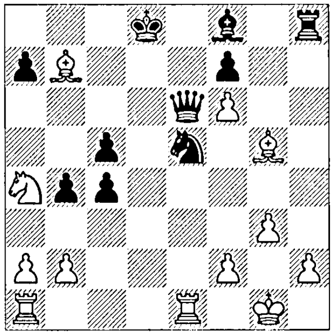


4d2) 24...♔a6! 25 ♘xc5+ ♕xc5 26 ♕xf8 (26 a3 b3!? doesn't change the situation) 26...♕f5 (26...c3? fails to 27 ♕a8!, but 26...♖h1+!? 27 ♔g2 ♖xa1 is far from clear) and White has to bail out with 27 ♖xa7+ ♔xa7 28 ♕e7+.

Was all this Piket's intention and how much did Shirov see? Only the players know for sure.

19 ... ♔xd8

20 ♗xb7 *(D)*



White has enough material for the queen and an important positional factor speaks in his favour – Black's king is permanently exposed.

20 ... ♔c7?

A very serious mistake, which effectively decides the game. The alternatives are:

1) 20...♕d7? 21 ♖xe5 (21 ♖ad1? ♘d3) 21...♕xb7 (21...♕xa4 22 ♗f4 ♗d6 23 b3 ♗xe5 24 ♖d1+ ♕d7 25 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 26 ♗xe5 c3 27 ♗e4 ♔e6 28 ♗f4 ♖d8 29 ♗c2 should win for White) 22 ♖d1+ ♔c7 23 ♗f4 ♔c6 24 ♖e8 ♔b5 25 b3!? and Black can hardly survive White's attack without his kingside pieces.

2) 20...♗d6 and now:

2a) 21 ♗g2? is weak in view of 21...♕f5 and ...♘d3.

2b) 21 f4 ♕h3 22 fxe5 ♕xh2+ 23 ♔f1 ♕xg3 gives Black sufficient counterchances.

2c) More natural is 21 ♗f4 ♕xf6 22 ♘xc5!, when Black has to tread very carefully:

2c1) After 22...♗xc5 23 ♖xe5 ♗xf2+ 24 ♔xf2 ♕b6+ 25 ♔f1 ♕xb7 26 ♖d1+ White wins at once.

2c2) 22...♖e8 23 ♖ed1! (23 ♖ad1? ♘f3+ 24 ♗xf3 ♖xe1+ 25 ♖xe1 ♗xc5 promises White nothing, while 23 ♘e4 ♘f3+ 24 ♔f1 ♖xe4 25 ♖xe4 ♗xf4 26 ♖xf4 ♕xb2 is not clear either) threatens ♘e4; e.g., 23...♔c7 24 ♘e4 ♘f3+ 25 ♔g2 ♘h4+ 26 ♔f1.

2c3) 22...♘d3 and now:

2c31) 23 ♘e4? is tempting, but insufficient in view of 23...♕xb2 24 ♗xd6 f5!.

2c32) 23 ♖e6 ♕xf4! (this move is safest; 23...fxe6 24 ♗g5 is advantageous for White and while the complications after 23...♕xb2 24 ♖xd6+ ♔e7 25 ♖d7+ ♔e8 26 ♖f1!? ♘xc5 27 ♖d2 ♕c3 28 ♖e2+ ♘e6 29 ♖d1 {or 29 ♗e5 ♕d3} 29...♕a3 are perhaps feasible for Black, they certainly involve a higher degree of risk) 24 gxf4 fxe6 25 ♘xd3 cxd3 26 ♖d1 ♗xf4 leads to a draw.

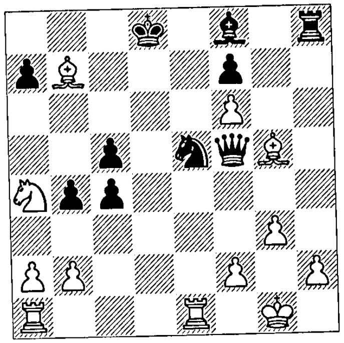
2c33) 23 ♘xd3 cxd3 24 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 25 ♖ad1 gives White an edge: the d-pawn will fall and his king is less exposed.

2c4) 22...♔c7 23 ♗g2 ♘f3+! 24 ♗xf3 ♗xf4 25 ♘e4 ♕g6 26 a3!? also gives White attacking chances.

2d) Even more promising seems the interesting line proposed by Marin: 21 ♖ad1!? ♔c7 22 ♗g2 ♕f5 23 ♗f4 ♖e8 (23...♘d3 24 ♖e7+ ♔d8 25 ♗xd6 ♕xf2+ 26 ♔h1 ♕c2 27 ♖f1 ♕xa4 28 ♗b7 ♕a5 29 ♖f5! and the attack breaks through) 24 ♖d5 ♘f3+ 25 ♗xf3 ♖xe1+ 26 ♔g2 ♗e5 27 ♘xc5 threatens ♘d7, and Black's bishop will not get out of the pin alive; e.g., 27...♔c8 28 ♗d2! ♖a1 29 ♗xb4 ♕xf6 30 ♗a5! and the concentrated power of White's pieces is too much even for the queen.

3) 20...♖h5 is hardly an improvement if White replies 21 h4, while in this version even 21 ♖xe5!? ♕xe5 22 ♖d1+ ♔c7 23 ♗f4 ♕xf4 24 gxf4 ♔xb7 25 ♖d7+ deserves attention.

4) This brings us to Black's best move, 20...♕f5! *(D)*:



4a) 21 ♖ad1+?! ♘d3 22 ♗f4 ♗d6! (22...♕d7 23 b3!? ♕xb7 24 bxc4 ♕d7 25 ♖e3 ♕xa4 26 ♖exd3+ ♔c8 27 ♖d8+ ♔b7 28 ♖1d7+ ♔a6 29 ♖c7 enables White to scrape a draw by repetition; e.g., 29...♕xa2 30 ♖c6+ ♔b7 31 ♖c7+) 23 ♗e4 ♕h3 24 ♖xd3 cxd3 25 ♗xd6 ♕xh2+ 26 ♔f1 ♕h1+! 27 ♗xh1 ♖xh1+ 28 ♔g2 ♖xe1 29 ♗f4 ♖e2 30 ♔f3 c4 is a line given by Shirov. Here Black is close to winning; e.g., 31 g4 c3 32 bxc3 ♖xa2 33 ♘c5 d2.

4b) Therefore White should play 21 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 22 ♖d1+ ♔c7 (22...♗d6? 23 ♗f4) 23 ♗f4 ♕xf4 24 gxf4 ♔xb7, and now:

4b1) 25 ♖d8 ♔c6 26 ♖c8+ ♔b5! 27 ♘xc5 ♗xc5! 28 ♖xh8 c3 and Black's passed pawn will queen.

4b2) 25 ♖d7+ ♔c6 and now 26 ♖xf7 a5 and 26 ♖xa7 ♔b5 clearly show the main minuses of White's position – with the knight trapped on a4 and his distorted kingside pawns he even has to be careful not to lose.

4b3) Best is 25 ♖c1 c3!? (25...♖h6 26 ♖xc4 ♔c6 27 b3 ♖xf6 28 ♘b2 ♖d6 is also possible) 26 bxc3 ♖h6 27 cxb4 cxb4 28 ♘c5+ ♗xc5 29 ♖xc5 ♔b6 30 ♖c4 a5, but even here Black's queenside majority will comfortably save the day for him.

21 ♗g2!

Now White doesn't have to go for the line above with 21 ♖xe5?! ♕xe5 22 ♗f4 ♕xf4 23 gxf4 ♔xb7.

21 ... ♕d7

Forced by the threats ♖xe5 and f4.

22 ♗f4!

More energetic than 22 ♖xe5.

22 ... ♕xa4

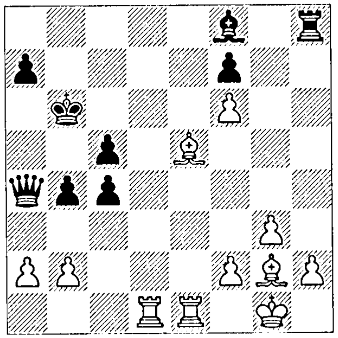
23 ♗xe5+

Simple, although both 23 a3!? and 23 b3!? are no less dangerous for Black.

23 ... ♔b6

23...♗d6 24 ♗xd6+ (24 b3!?) 24...♔xd6 25 b3 gives White a devastating attack, while 23...♔c8 24 ♗f1! ♕d7 25 ♖ad1 ♕g4 26 f4 is just as hopeless for Black, since his lone queen can't fight against White's whole army.

24 ♖ad1 *(D)*



24 ... ♖h5

24...♕xa2 25 ♖d8 pins Black's pieces on their back rank and makes the attack irresistible. 24...♗h6 25 ♖d6+ ♔a5 26 ♗b7 ♕b5 27 ♗c6 is no more satisfactory for Black.

25 ♖d8 ♖xe5

25...♗h6? 26 ♖b8+ ♔a6 27 ♗b7+ ♔b6 28 ♗d5+ leads to mate, so Black must give up both his pieces and pin his hopes on the c-pawn.

26 ♖xe5 c3!?

26...♗h6 27 ♖e7 gives White a mating attack.

27 bxc3 bxc3

28 ♖b8+

This gives rise to some interesting complications, but White's victory will never be in any doubt. Shirov prefers the brutal 28 ♗e4!? c2 29 ♗xc2 ♕xc2 30 ♖xf8.

28 ... ♔a5

29 ♖xf8 ♕d1+

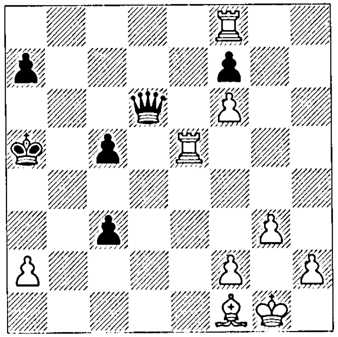
30 ♗f1 ♕d6 *(D)*

30...c2? loses at once to 31 ♖xc5+ and ♖fc8.

31 ♖fe8 c2

32 ♖e1 ♕d1

32...♕d2 leads to a similar position. Although the c-pawn will cost White a rook, his material advantage will still suffice.



33 ♖8e7 ♔b6

33...c1♕ 34 ♖xd1 ♕xd1 35 ♖xa7+ ♔b4 36 ♖xf7 makes it easier for White, as the f-pawn will decide.

34 h4! c1♕

Sooner or later necessary.

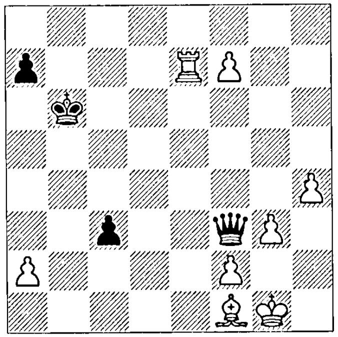
35 ♖xd1 ♕xd1

36 ♖xf7 c4

After 36...♕d4 37 ♗g2 ♔a6 (37...c4 loses to 38 ♖b7+ followed by f7) 38 ♖c7! White wins easily.

37 ♖e7 c3

38 f7 ♕f3 *(D)*



39 ♖b7+!

The final blow. 39 ♖e3 ♕xf7 40 ♖xc3 ♕xa2 would still please Black.

39 ... ♔c5

The rook is untouchable: 39...♔xb7 40 ♗g2 or 39...♕xb7 40 f8♕ c2 41 ♕b4+ ♔c7 42 ♕c3+ ♕c6 43 ♗c4. 39...♔a5 40 ♖xa7+ ♔b4 41 ♖c7 is also hopeless for Black.

40 ♖c7+ ♔d6

41 ♗g2!

41 ♖xc3 ♕xf7 42 a3 wins as well, but Shirov wants to score faster.

41 ... ♕d1+

41...♕f5 42 ♗e4! ♕xe4 43 ♖c8 is a pleasing finish.

42 ♔h2 ♔xc7
43 f8♕ c2
44 ♕f4+ ♔b6
45 ♗f3 1-0

After 45...♕b1, 46 ♗e4 wins, while other moves also cost Black the c2-pawn.

Summary

This game provides a textbook example of how to react when the opponent comes up with a sharp novelty. Shirov presumably sank into a long think after 18...♘e5! and definitely saw at least some of the looming perpetuals. However, he decided not to bail out and offered a sacrifice himself, correctly presuming that Piket probably didn't invest too much time in 19 ♕xd8+!. Shirov assessed that his pieces would cooperate well enough to give him good compensation for the queen; moreover his king would remain in safety. Although objectively his move wasn't much better than 19 ♗xb7+, it had the significant additional advantage of taking the sting out of the opponent's preparation. And sure enough, after the erroneous 20...♔c7? the game was practically over. White managed to exchange his unhappy knight and his attack proved too strong. So strong that White could allow himself a rather spectacular solution instead of the dry technical one (28 ♗e4!?).

Although most of the excitement in the game remained behind the scenes, Black's best defence 20...♕f5! provides us with a valuable lesson. Even in the sharpest and most tactical positions, strategy shouldn't be forgotten. When under attack, one must try to reduce the opponent's potential and leave him with the most harmless pieces. In this line of the Botvinnik such an outcast is of course White's a4-knight.

Game 11

Garry Kasparov – Vishy Anand

Tal memorial tournament, Riga 1995

Evans Gambit [C51]

1 e4 e5
2 ♘f3 ♘c6
3 ♗c4 ♗c5
4 b4

Such a move can hardly pass without any comment. Kasparov might well be the first world champion to try the Evans Gambit in a serious tournament game. This was his last encounter with Anand before their title match, which can explain the use of a psychological weapon of the highest calibre.

4 ... ♗xb4

This is one of those gambits that must be accepted. Look what happened just a month later: 4...♗b6 5 a4 a5 6 b5 ♘d4 7 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 8 c3 ♗b6 9 d4 exd4 10 0-0 ♘e7 11 ♗g5 h6 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 cxd4 ♕d6?! 14 ♘c3 ♗xd4 15 ♘d5! ♗xa1 16 ♕xa1 0-0 17 e5 ♕c5 18 ♖c1 c6 19 ♗a2 ♕a3 20 ♘b6 and White was winning in Kasparov-Piket, Amsterdam Euwe mem 1995.

5 c3 ♗e7

The usual modern choice. However, nobody has yet refuted the older and solid 5...♗a5 6 d4 d6!. A recent example: 7 ♕b3 (Lasker's defence 7 0-0 ♗b6! remains reliable) 7...♕d7 8 dxe5 ♗b6 9 ♘bd2 ♘a5 10 ♕b4 ♘xc4 11 ♘xc4 ♗c5 12 ♕b3 ♘e7 13 0-0 0-0 14 exd6 cxd6 15 ♗a3 ♕c7 16 ♘d4 ♗xa3 17 ♘xa3 ♘c6 18 ♖fe1 ♕e7 19 ♖ab1 ♘e5 20 c4 a6 21 ♘ac2 ♗e6 with equality, Short-Hübner, Dortmund 1997.

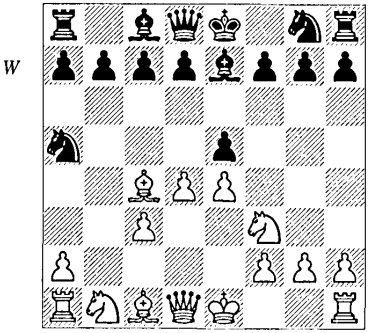
6 d4

6 ♕b3 ♘h6 7 d4 ♘a5 doesn't pose a serious threat to Black:

1) 8 ♕a4 ♘xc4 9 ♕xc4 ♘g4! 10 h3 (10 dxe5 d6) 10...♘f6 11 dxe5 d5 is more than OK for Black.

2) A recent example with 8 ♕b5!? ♘xc4 9 ♗xh6 ♘d6 (9...gxh6 10 ♕xc4 gives White good compensation) 10 ♕xe5 ♘xe4 (10...f6!?) 11 ♗xg7 ♖g8 12 ♕xe4 ♖xg7 13 0-0 d5 14 ♕e5 ♔f8 15 ♖e1 ♕d6 16 ♕e2 ♗h3 17 g3 f6 18 ♘bd2 ♔g8 19 c4 c6 gave Black a solid position in Morozevich-Bacrot, Sarajevo 2000.

6 ... ♘a5 *(D)*



7 ♗e2!?

This ambitious move, leaving the a5-knight out on a limb, had until then been used mostly in correspondence games.

1) 7 ♗xf7+?! ♔xf7 8 ♘xe5+ is speculative due to 8...♔e8!?; White's compensation for the piece after 9 ♕h5+ g6 10 ♘xg6 ♘f6 11 ♕h4 ♖g8 is hardly sufficient.

2) After 7 ♗d3 the safest is 7...d6! 8 dxe5 (weak is 8 ♕a4+ c6 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♘xe5? f6) 8...♘c6 (or 8...♗g4!?). By returning the pawn, Black releases the tension and achieves a pleasant position – a common motif in the Evans.

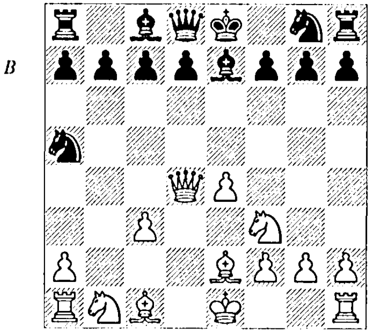
3) The most usual continuation 7 ♘xe5 ♘xc4 8 ♘xc4 d5 9 exd5 ♕xd5 10 ♘e3 ♕d8 11 0-0 ♘f6 12 c4 0-0 13 ♘c3 was used by Kasparov himself two years earlier in a theme exhibition game against Short. After 13...c5!? 14 d5?! ♘e8 15 ♗b2 ♘d6 16 ♕d3 f5 17 f4 ♗f6 18 ♘cd1 ♗xb2 19 ♘xb2 ♕f6 20 ♕c2 ♗d7 Black had an excellent position in Sveshnikov-Nikolov, Ljubljana 1999.

7 ... exd4

Black must resolve the situation in the centre. 7...♘f6? loses a knight to 8 dxe5 ♘xe4 9 ♕a4, but 7...d5 is interesting, although after 8 ♕a4+!? (8 exd5 exd4 9 ♕xd4 ♘f6 10 c4 0-0 is comfortable for Black) 8...c6 9 dxe5 b5 10 ♕c2 the e5-pawn seriously cramps Black and hinders the development of his kingside. The better alternative 7...d6!? allows White to play 8 ♕a4+ c6 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♘xe5, when compared with note '2' to White's 7th move his bishop is not on the exposed d3-square. However, it's not clear if this gives him anything substantial; Black was OK after 10...♘f6 11 0-0 b5 12 ♕c2 0-0 13 a4 (perhaps 13 ♗b2!?, with the idea c4, is better) 13...♕c7! 14 ♘f3 a6 15 ♗g5 ♗g4 16 ♘bd2 ♘b7 17 h3 ♗h5 18 ♖ae1 ♘c5 in Short-Svidler, Internet (KasparovChess Cup) 2000.

8 ♕xd4 *(D)*

A direct continuation. Instead, 8 cxd4 d5!? doesn't promise White anything.



8 ... ♘f6

A natural developing move, but is it really the best? As is usually the case with Kasparov's opening preferences, this game unleashed a wave of interest in the Evans and other continuations were tested afterwards. Black can choose between clinging to his extra pawn or giving it back at once:

1) 8...♗f6 9 e5 ♘c6? loses a piece due to the instructive manoeuvre 10 ♕d5! ♘ge7 (10...♗e7 11 ♗c4) 11 ♕e4 d5 12 ♕a4!.

2) More to the point is the Steinitzian defensive concept 8...f6!? 9 0-0 b6. Black keeps his pieces from the reach of White's pawns and intends to develop with ...♗c5 and ...♘e7, and possibly even castle queenside. His position remains a hard nut to crack.

3) Something similar can be said about 8...♔f8, but one can hardly expect Black to try such measures when facing a surprise.

4) The contemporary approach is represented by 8...d6 9 ♕xg7 ♗f6 10 ♕g3 ♕e7 11 ♘g5!? (11 0-0?! ♕xe4 12 ♖e1 ♔f8 13 ♗b5 ♕g6 14 ♖e8+ ♔g7 15 ♘g5 ♘h6 doesn't give White enough for the pawn, Shetty-T.Ravi,

Indian Ch (Kasaragod) 1996) 11...h5 (11...h6 12 ♘h7! is also unclear) 12 ♗f4 h4 13 ♕e3 with a double-edged position.

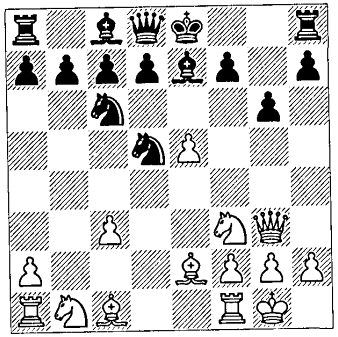
5) My personal favourite is 8...d5!?, as 9 exd5 ♘f6 leads to a position we have already mentioned above as satisfactory for Black.

9 e5 ♘c6
10 ♕h4 ♘d5
11 ♕g3 g6

11...0-0?! is insufficient in view of 12 ♗h6 g6 13 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 14 ♗c4.

12 0-0 *(D)*

B



After a series of forced moves it's time to assess the position. For the pawn White has more space, a lead in development and attacking prospects. It's a different question if he has the advantage, but Kasparov enjoys such tense situations.

12 ... ♘b6?!

With the king in the middle this is playing with fire. Other moves:

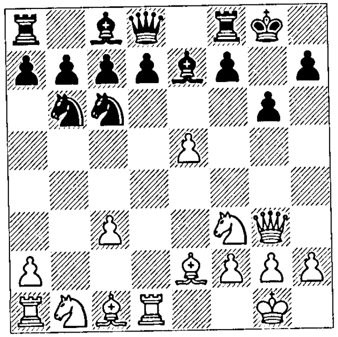
1) 12...d6 13 ♖d1 can lead to the game position, as Black's attempt to further his development with 13...♗e6?! 14 c4 ♘db4 (14...♘b6 15 c5) 15 a3 ♘a6 16 ♗h6 ♕d7 17 ♘c3 0-0-0 18 ♘b5 gives White a strong attack.

2) The most logical move is 12...0-0, and now:

2a) 13 ♗h6 ♖e8 14 c4 ♘b6 15 ♘c3 d6 16 c5 (16 ♖ad1?! ♘xe5 17 ♘xe5 ♗h4 18 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 doesn't give White anything concrete) 16...dxc5!? (16...♘d7 17 cxd6 cxd6 18 exd6 ♗f6 was played in Ponomariov-Daniliuk, Krasnodar 1997; then the modest 19 ♗g5 ♘d4 20 ♘xd4 ♗xg5 21 ♖ad1 would have given White some edge due to his strong passed pawn) 17 ♗b5 ♕d7! 18 h3 a6 and White's initiative is hardly worth the sacrificed pawns.

2b) 13 ♖d1 ♘b6 *(D)* and now:

W



2b1) 14 c4 impedes Black's development, but seems rather slow:

2b11) 14...d6?! 15 c5 ♘a4! (15...♘d7 16 cxd6 cxd6 17 exd6 ♗f6 18 ♗g5 favours White) 16 cxd6 cxd6 17 ♗h6! (17 exd6? ♗f6 18 ♗g5 h6! 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 is a different story now, as Black wins material; 17 ♗b5 ♕a5 18 ♗xa4 ♕xa4 19 ♘c3 ♕a5 20 ♘d5 is interesting but less clear) 17...♖e8 18 ♕f4 ♘c5 19 ♘c3! (19 exd6 is weaker due to 19...♗f6 20 ♗g5 ♗f5 21 ♕h4 ♘e4) and Black's position is under heavy pressure.

2b12) 14...♘a4! is a much stronger move. Black takes c5 under control, arrests White's knight on b1 and prepares the liberating move ...d6.

2b2) 14 ♗f4!?, intending a slow build-up with ♘d2-e4, is quite unpleasant for Black. Nevertheless, the immediate 14...d6 is sufficient for approximate equality.

13 c4?!

This is the only moment when one can have objections against White's play. Chandler's recommendation 13 ♗h6! keeps Black's king trapped in the middle. After 13...♗f8 (13...d6 is no better in view of 14 ♗b5) 14 ♗f4!? White's lead in development is quite alarming.

13 ... d6

Black still wavers. 13...0-0! transposes to the lines investigated above. Also here 13...♘a4!? deserves attention; if given the chance Black may even manage to castle queenside.

14 ♖d1

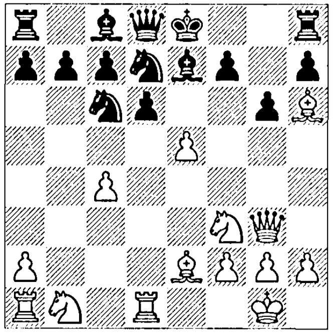
14 c5?! is over-optimistic due to 14...dxc5 15 ♘c3 ♘d4.

14 ... ♘d7

After this ugly undeveloping move White's attack gets a strong new impulse, as Black's king stays pinned down in the centre until the bitter end. The threat was c5 and we've already seen what happens after 14...0-0?!. The best defence was again 14...♘a4!? 15 ♗h6 (15 ♗a3 0-0 16 c5 d5 gets White nowhere) 15...♗f5. Black prepares ...♕d7 and ...0-0-0, and White's attacking chances are certainly less real than in the game.

15 ♗h6! *(D)*

B



15 ... ♘cxe5

Black can't quite ignore the e5-pawn. However, after 15...dxe5 16 ♘c3 (16 ♗g7? ♖g8 17 ♗xe5 ♘cxe5 18 ♘xe5 ♗d6) White just calmly improves his position (♘d5, doubling on the d-file, etc.) and it's very difficult for Black to unravel his pieces properly. A good sample line by Kasparov himself is 16...♗f8 17 ♗g5 f6 18 ♗e3 ♗g7 19 c5 0-0 20 ♗c4+ ♔h8 21 ♘h4 ♘e7 22 ♘d5!. Then after 22...g5 (22...♘xd5?, as given by Kasparov, loses at once to 23 ♘xg6+! hxg6 24 ♗xd5) 23 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 24 ♘f5 ♕e8 25 h4 White has strong pressure.

16 ♘xe5 ♘xe5

16...dxe5 17 ♘c3 c6 (17...♗f8? 18 ♖xd7!) doesn't help, as White can pile on pressure with 18 ♘e4 ♕c7 19 ♖d2!? or even play the simple 18 ♗g7 ♗f6 19 ♗xh8 ♗xh8 20 ♘e4.

17 ♘c3!?

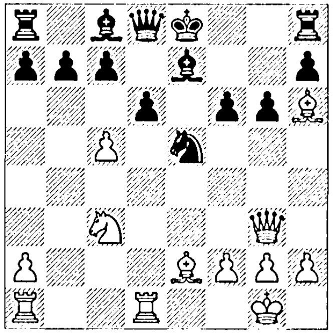
After 17 ♗g7 ♗f6 18 ♗xh8 ♗xh8 19 ♘c3 b6 Black's position is very solid. White has greater ambitions.

17 ... f6?!

17...♗f8? 18 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 19 c5 and 17...♗e6 18 ♗g7 ♗f6 19 ♗xh8 ♗xh8 20 c5 both give White a tremendous attack. These lines show that Black's crucial task was to prevent the break c5. As 17...b6 18 c5! bxc5 19 f4 ♘d7 20 ♗b5 is not the ideal solution for Black, the best continuation was 17...♘d7! 18 ♘e4 (18 ♘d5 ♘c5 19 ♗f3 ♗e6 is also unclear) 18...♘f6 19 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 20 ♖ab1 ♗h4, when White certainly has pressure, but the outcome still remains very much open.

18 c5 *(D)*

B



18 ... ♘f7?

Another disharmonious move, after which Anand's position will be beyond repair. Black can't defend effectively with most of his pieces on the back rank, so it was high time to develop the bishop.

1) 18...♗e6 deserves attention. Then 19 ♗b5+ ♔f7 and 19 ♘b5 a6 20 cxd6 axb5!? 21 ♗xb5+ c6 22 dxe7 ♕xe7 are unconvincing for White, while 19 cxd6 ♗xd6 (19...cxd6 20 ♘d5 gives White more than enough play) 20 ♘e4 ♕e7 21 f4 ♘c6 (21...♘f7 22 ♗g7) 22 ♗b5 (22 ♖xd6?! cxd6 23 f5 ♗d5 24 ♘xd6+ ♔d7 25 ♘b5 ♖ad8 is too wild) is quite unpleasant for Black. Maintaining the tension with 19 ♖ab1!? is even more incisive.

2) 18...♗d7!? 19 cxd6 cxd6 20 ♘d5 ♗c6 is also better than the text-move.

19 cxd6 cxd6

The alternative was 19...♗xd6 (19...♘xh6? 20 dxc7) 20 ♗b5+ ♗d7 (Black's position falls apart after 20...c6?! 21 ♗f4 cxb5 22 ♗xd6) 21 ♖e1+ ♗e5 22 ♗g7 ♖g8 23 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 24

♖ad1+ ♗d6 25 ♕h3+, when Black's king can't survive for long.

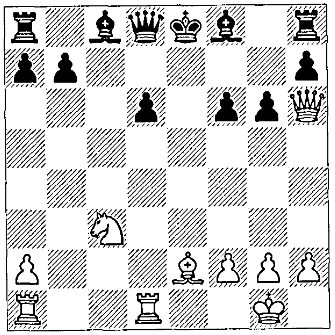
20 ♕e3 ♘xh6

The threat was ♗g7, and after 20...♕b6 21 ♗b5+ ♗d7 (21...♔d8 22 ♕e2! and ♘d5 decides) 22 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 23 ♕h3+ and ♘d5 the attack is too strong.

21 ♕xh6 ♗f8 *(D)*

Sad, but necessary; Black can't allow White to play ♕g7.

W



22 ♕e3+!

Kasparov is ruthless as usual. 22 ♗b5+? ♔f7 23 ♗c4+ d5 gives Black breathing space, as 24 ♖xd5 ♗xh6 25 ♖xd8+ ♔g7 is just nothing for White.

22 ... ♔f7

22...♕e7 23 ♘e4 and 22...♗e7 23 ♘d5 are hardly any better.

23 ♘d5 ♗e6?!

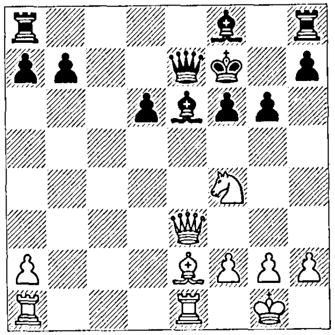
One can understand that Black wants to cover the gaping a2-g8 diagonal, but on e6 the bishop is just too vulnerable. After 23...♗e7 24 ♗c4 ♗e6 25 ♖e1 ♗xd5 26 ♗xd5+ ♔e8 27 ♗xb7 White breaks through on the light squares, while 23...♗g7 24 ♗c4 ♗e6 25 ♗b3!, followed by a winning knight move, is no different. Even after 23...♗d7 24 ♖ac1 Black cannot prevent the decisive invasion for long, as he is playing without his kingside pieces and moreover his king is in grave danger.

24 ♘f4 ♕e7

After 24...♕d7 25 ♗b5! ♕xb5 26 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 27 ♘d5 White wins immediately, while after 24...♗c8 25 ♖ac1 Black has no sensible defence against ♖xc8!.

25 ♖e1! *(D)*

B



1-0

Resignation is certainly not premature. The threat is ♗f3 and this wins even after 25...d5. We've already seen 25...♕d7 26 ♗b5, while 25...♗h6 allows 26 ♗c4! and 25...♖e8 26 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 27 ♕xe6+ costs Black a rook.

Summary

It's well worth while to prepare something unexpected and out of the ordinary for an important game. Such a surprise should however be in keeping with the player's style. As Kasparov was from his early youth impressed by Alekhine's games, it's no wonder he chose an aggressive gambit, refreshing an ancient opening with a relatively untested idea. Compared with, for example, the Benko Gambit, the Evans doesn't give the active side long-term positional pluses, but requires resourcefulness to make use of the lead in development and attacking chances. This suits Kasparov well enough, but as has already been said above, his choice had mainly psychological value. This is borne out by the fact that after the game with Piket he hasn't used the Evans any more. Practical examples and analysis have proved that 7 ♗e2!? is no wonder weapon and Black has more than one satisfactory antidote. However, in a tournament game this also tends to be a drawback (see Summary to Game 7).

Confronted with an unknown situation, Anand's reaction was far from ideal. He violated several general principles, such as getting your king to safety (12...♘b6?!, 13...d6), not weakening a position under pressure (17...f6?!) and last but not least development (14...♘d7 and especially 18...♘f7?). Despite all this, only the last mistake was really terminal. And of course it required energetic measures by White (13 c4?! was the only minor glitch) to keep Black's forces out of play and achieve victory in just 25 moves against an illustrious opponent.

Game 12

Judit Polgar – Viktor Korchnoi

Madrid 1995

Caro-Kann Defence, Classical Variation [B19]

1 e4 c6
2 d4 d5
3 ♘c3 dxe4
4 ♘xe4 ♗f5
5 ♘g3 ♗g6
6 h4

This is White's only hope to fight for an advantage. Shortly before the current game Korchnoi again proved this well-known fact: 6 ♘f3 ♘f6 7 ♘e5 ♘bd7 8 ♘xg6?! hxg6 9 ♗d3 ♕c7 10 ♕f3 e6 11 ♗e3 c5 12 dxc5 ♗xc5 13 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 14 ♗b5+ ♔e7! 15 0-0-0 ♖h4! 16 ♗e2 ♖c8 17 ♔b1 b5 18 ♕e3 b4 with a very strong attack for Black, Ashley-Korchnoi, San Francisco 1995.

6 ... h6
7 h5

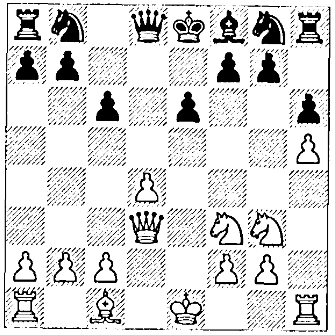
This often used to be played automatically. In quite a few games the h-pawn's cramping effect persisted well into an endgame, arising usually after both sides castled queenside and Black's liberating ...c5 led to numerous exchanges. However, after Black recently increasingly started play the line with ...0-0, White on the other hand realized he could make use of the h5-square. An experience of my own: 7 ♘f3 ♘f6 8 ♘e5 ♗h7 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 e6 11 ♗f4 ♗e7 (11...♕a5+!? 12 ♗d2 ♕a6 is better) 12 0-0-0 ♘bd7 13 ♕e2 0-0 14 ♔b1 ♕b6 15 ♘xd7! ♘xd7 16 ♖d3 ♕b5 17 ♖c1 ♖fe8 18 c4 ♕a5 19 ♗d2 ♕d8 20 ♘h5 and now Black's last chance in Z.Almasi-Stohl, Mitropa Cup (Baden) 1999, was 20...♘f6! with the idea 21 ♗xh6 gxh6 22 ♖g3+ ♔h8 23 ♕e3 ♗f8! 24 ♕e5 ♗d6.

7 ... ♗h7
8 ♘f3 e6

Some 20 years ago, 8...♘d7 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 ♕c7 was hailed as the most accurate move-order. Black covers the f4-square and quickly castles queenside. Nowadays hardly anybody fears ♗f4 and, as mentioned above, Black often has different ideas with his king.

9 ♗d3 ♗xd3
10 ♕xd3 *(D)*

B



10 ... ♘d7

The more modern treatment is characterized by 10...♘f6 11 ♗d2 and now either the immediate central action 11...c5 12 0-0-0 ♘c6, or 11...♗e7 12 0-0-0 0-0. Here Black delays ...c5 for a while. Originally it was considered very risky to castle to a flank already weakened by ...h6, but practical experience has shown it's not easy for White to organize a successful attack. His knights get in the way of a possible pawn-storm and when the centre opens up, Black usually gets sufficient counterplay.

11 ♗f4

11 ♗d2 ♕c7 would lead to the game position a move earlier. Polgar nevertheless tries it on the longer diagonal...

11 ... ♕a5+
12 ♗d2

...but not for long. After 12 c3 ♘gf6 White has problems with placing his king; e.g., 13 a4

♘d5 14 ♗d2 ♕c7 15 a5 (15 0-0 ♗d6 16 ♘e4 ♘5f6! pinpoints the weak h5-pawn) 15...♗d6 16 ♘e4 ♘5f6 17 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 18 ♖h4 c5 19 ♔f1 0-0 20 ♗f4 ♕c6 21 ♘e5 ♘xe5 22 ♗xe5 ♘d7 and Black had nothing to complain about in Tseshkovsky-Douven, Alma-Ata 1989.

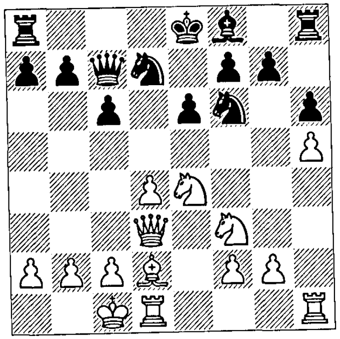
12 ... ♕c7

13 0-0-0 ♘gf6

14 ♘e4 *(D)*

The popularity of 14 ♕e2 waned after practice showed that 14...♗d6 15 ♘f5 ♗f4 is a reliable antidote: 16 ♗xf4 (16 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 17 ♘xe6+ fxe6 18 ♕xe6 ♖e8 leads to a position where the extra piece is worth more than three pawns) 16...♕xf4+ 17 ♘e3 0-0!? 18 g3 ♕c7 19 g4 c5 20 dxc5 ♘e4 with sufficient counterplay, Galkin-Khlian, Russian Cht 1998.

B



14 ... ♗d6!?

Korchnoi is no fan of passive positions and the more usual 14...0-0-0 15 g3 ♘xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♘f6 17 ♕e2 ♗d6 18 c4 c5 19 ♗c3 cxd4 20 ♘xd4 a6 doesn't attract him. White still preserves a small edge after 21 ♔b1 or 21 ♘f3 and although Black has fair chances to equalize gradually, the maximum he can expect for his efforts is a draw. The text-move was introduced by Seirawan in 1983; below we'll speak about the reasons why twelve years later he abandoned his invention and switched to 4...♘d7.

15 ♔b1

A useful semi-waiting move.

1) The idea behind Black's 14...♗d6!? is clearly seen if White tries to transpose into the aforementioned lines with 15 g3. Black replies 15...b5!?, showing his intention was not ...0-0-0 at all. Black needs the bishop on d6 to cover the important e5- and f4-squares, and as he wants to attack White's king, his own king will probably end up on the opposite flank. His light-square strategy works tactically, as 16 ♗a5 (16 ♔b1 a5 leads to a double-edged position; Black's counterattack shouldn't be underestimated) 16...♕xa5 17 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 18 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 19 ♘e5+ ♔g8 20 ♕g6 ♕xa2 only gives White a perpetual, Spangenberg-Seirawan, Buenos Aires 1993.

2) Also the positions after the principled 15 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 are at least unclear: 16 ♕e2 (16 c4 b5! can prove dangerous for White) 16...b5 17 ♔b1 (17 ♘e5 ♕d5 18 ♔b1 allows even 18...♕xg2!? 19 ♖hg1 ♕e4 20 ♕xe4 ♘xe4 21 ♗e3 ♖h7! and in the endgame Black has little to fear) 17...♕d5 18 ♖h4 a5 19 ♘e5 b4 and in Wolff-Seirawan, USA Ch (Durango) 1992, Black has achieved his main goals – central light-square control and sharp play.

15 ... ♘xe4

The difference between 15 g3 and Polgar's move becomes obvious after 15...b5? 16 ♗a5! ♕b8 (16...♕xa5 17 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 18 ♘e5 ♔xd6 19 ♕g3! is resignable for Black) 17 ♘e5! with a strong attack; e.g., 17...♘xe5 18 ♘xf6+ gxf6 19 dxe5 ♗xe5 20 ♕d7+ ♔f8 21 ♕xc6 ♔g7 22 ♖d7. As 15...0-0-0 16 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 17 ♕e2 is not ideal either, Seirawan used to pin his hopes on 15...♗f4!?, until he had to fight his own recommendation: 16 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 17 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 18 ♕a3! ♕c7 19 ♘e5 ♕e7 20 ♕e3, Khalifman-Seirawan, Amsterdam Donner mem 1995. Now Black's best is 20...0-0-0 (20...0-0?! 21 g4 is playing with fire) 21 c4 ♘d7 22 ♘f3, but it leads to the typical slightly worse position he has been trying to avoid in the first place.

16 ♕xe4 ♘f6

16...b5 17 ♕g4 ♔f8 seemed too risky even to Korchnoi.

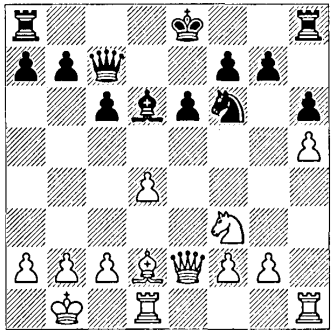
17 ♕e2 *(D)*

17 ... b5?

This was the last round of a Category 16 tournament and one can understand Korchnoi's optimism after scoring a brilliant 6½/8, but now Black will have problems with his king. The less ambitious 17...0-0-0 18 c4 ♖he8 19 ♗c3 c5 was more prudent. This position actually arose by transposition in the game Morović-Korchnoi, Las Palmas 1992, which was drawn.

18 ♘e5! ♗xe5?!

B



Such a knight can't be tolerated for long. The question is where Black's king should go. 18...0-0-0 19 c4 and 18...0-0 19 g4 both give White's attack a head-start. 18...♘d5!? is thematic, but after 19 ♖h4 or 19 ♖h3!? the rook threatens to attack g7 and an exchange on e5 is sooner or later forced. 19 f4, with ideas such as ♕g4 or f5, is also unpleasant; after 19...♗xe5 20 fxe5 Black's 'royal' problems persist.

19 dxe5 ♘d5

The knight naturally belongs in the centre. After 19...♘d7 the sortie 20 ♕g4! is disruptive. Both 20...♘xe5 21 ♕xg7 and 20...♕xe5 21 ♗c3 ♕g5 22 ♕d4 (followed by ♕d6) are out of the question, while 20...♔f8 21 f4 gives White excellent attacking prospects, as Black's forces lack coordination.

20 ♖h4! *(D)*

A refined multi-purpose move. We already know c4 and g4 are the correct reactions to ...0-0-0 and ...0-0 respectively. However, impatience is out of place, as 20 c4? bxc4 21 ♕xc4 0-0 just opens a file against White's own king. After 20 g4 b4! the d5-knight is the bastion of Black's defences; the possible follow-up might be ...a5 and ...♕b6-b5. Black can tuck his king away with ...♔d7-c7 or even ...0-0-0. 20 f4 with the idea ♕g4 allows Black to consider even 20...0-0-0 21 c4 bxc4 22 ♕xc4 ♘b6 with counterplay on the d-file. White's move stops ...b4 and creates the threat ♖g4.

20 ... 0-0

20...0-0-0 is suicidal due to 21 c4, but now White gets going on the other side.

21 g4

White can't break through with piece-play alone after 21 ♖g4 ♔h8.

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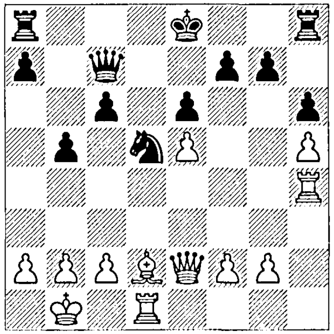


21 ... ♕e7

This is more or less forced. After 21...a5 22 g5 White's attack is fast and free of charge.

22 g5! hxg5

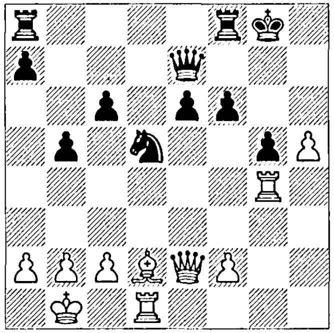
23 ♖g4 f6

Again the only move; after 23...♘f4 24 ♗xf4 gxf4 25 ♖dg1 f5 26 ♖g6 the threat of h6 is deadly.

24 exf6 gxf6 *(D)*

After 24...♕xf6? 25 ♖xg5 ♔h8 26 h6 g6 27 ♖xd5! White wins.

W



25 f4 e5

25...♔h8? doesn't improve the king's position, as after 26 fxg5 f5 27 ♖gg1 e5 28 g6 Black is a few tempi down compared with the lines below.

26 fxe5?!

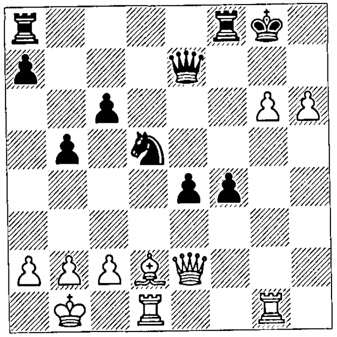
This positional move (capture towards the centre; open the game for the bishop) is inconsistent and squanders a part of White's advantage. Correct was the straightforward 26 fxg5! f5 (what else?) 27 ♖gg1. Although Black's king is protected by White's connected passed pawns, it's like living on a volcano:

1) 27...f4 28 g6 (28 ♕e4 ♕e6 29 g6 ♕f5 only wastes time for White and is less clear) 28...f3 29 ♕e4 f2 30 ♖h1 and h6 wins; Black's duo is immobilized.

2) 27...e4 is more natural:

2a) The artificial 28 c4?! bxc4 29 ♕xc4 e3 30 ♕xc6 ♕e4+ 31 ♔a1 f4! only complicates matters, as Black's pawns have become very dangerous.

2b) Preferable is the direct 28 g6 f4 29 h6 *(D)*, when all the natural moves lose: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2b1) 29...f3 30 ♕h2 is the end at once, as now both g7 and h7+ are threats.

2b2) 29...♖f5 30 ♕g4 ♕e6 31 ♗xf4! ♘xf4 32 ♖d6 ♕xd6 33 ♕xf5 ♖f8 34 g7! ♖xf5 35 h7+ leads to mate.

2b3) 29...e3 30 g7 ♖f6 31 h7+! ♔xh7 32 ♕g4 ♔g8 33 ♕h4 ♕e8 and now the most convincing is 34 ♗b4! ♘xb4 35 ♖d7! ♕xd7 36 ♕h8+ ♔f7 37 ♕xa8.

2b4) 29...♖f6 30 ♕h5 e3 31 ♗e1 ♖d6 (the alternative 31...f3?! 32 ♖xd5 f2 33 ♖f1 fxe1♕+ 34 ♖xe1 is insufficient for Black) 32 ♖xd5! cxd5 33 ♗b4 e2 (33...f3 34 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 35 g7) 34 h7+ ♔g7 35 ♖h1 ♔h8 36 g7+! and White's pawns (and attack) arrive first.

26 ... ♔h8!

The king leaves a file that will open shortly and hides behind the h5-pawn. Alternatives are weaker: 26...♕xe5? loses material to 27 ♖xg5+, while 26...♖fe8 27 ♕d3 ♕xe5 28 ♕g6+ ♔f8 (28...♔h8? 29 ♗xg5) 29 ♖f1 is just as bad for Black. The somewhat better 26...♖ae8 27 ♕d3! ♕h7 (27...♕xe5 loses at once to 28 ♕g6+ ♔h8 29 ♕h6+ ♔g8 30 ♗xg5) 28 ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 29 exf6 ♘e3 (29...♘xf6 30 ♖xg5 ♘e4 31 ♖gg1 is similar) 30 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 31 ♖xg5 ♖xf6 32 ♖dg1 promises Black some counterplay, but not sufficient compensation; he has to struggle desperately for a draw in the endgame. Moreover, his task is complicated by the fact his king is too far from the queenside action.

27 ♖e1

27 ♕d3? ♕xe5 28 ♕g6 ♕e7 gets White nowhere.

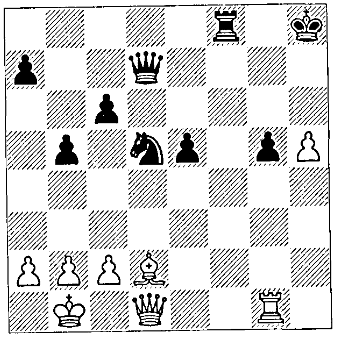
27 ... ♖ae8
28 ♕d1

28 e6?! ♕d6 results in an unclear position, as Black's king is well protected by pawns, both his own and White's. Polgar understandably wants to open up the kingside.

28 ... ♕d7
29 ♖gg1

29 exf6?? would be a costly oversight in view of 29...♖xe1 30 ♗xe1 ♘c3+.

29 ... ♖xe5
30 ♖xe5 fxe5 *(D)*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31 ♗xg5

31 ♖xg5!? is also possible. Black has no effective way to exploit the weakened back rank, because 31...♘e3 32 ♕e2 only helps White.

Now the complications are over and we can assess their result. Black has managed to parry the direct threats and simplify the position. However, his vulnerable king still requires full attention, and White has a better minor piece and her initiative is far from over.

31 ... ♕f5?!

Inaccurate. Black would welcome further advantageous exchanges to safeguard his king, but now he will only be able to get the rooks off the board at the cost of the a-pawn. Therefore 31...♖g8!? was a better chance. Black wants to play either ...♕f5 or ...♕e6, but nevertheless after 32 ♗c1! (32 ♕f3 is weaker in view of 32...♕e6 33 ♕e4 ♘f6) his position remains difficult:

1) 32...♘f6 and now:

1a) 33 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 34 ♕xd7?! is premature; after 34...♘xd7, Black's king is closer to the centre and with the knight on d5 White will find it difficult to make progress. After 35 c4 (35 ♗e3 ♘f6 36 h6 ♘g4 37 ♗xa7 ♘xh6 is drawish as well) 35...bxc4 36 ♔c2 ♘f6 37 ♔c3 ♘xh5 38 ♔xc4 ♔f7 Black can't lose.

1b) 33 ♕xd7! ♘xd7 34 ♖d1 is much more unpleasant: the rook enters via d6 and Black is in trouble.

2) The last line shows Black needs his knight in the centre. Nevertheless after 32...♖xg1 (playing 32...♖g2 33 ♕e1 just postpones the inevitable) 33 ♕xg1 White's winning chances remain very real, as his mobile queen can attack Black's weaknesses (a7, c6 and e5) and simultaneously help the h-pawn.

32 ♗c1 ♕e6

32...♘f4 would allow White to activate her queen by 33 ♕d6 ♕f6 34 ♕c5, while 32...♖g8 33 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 34 ♕g1+ is no better, as after 34...♔h8 35 ♕xa7 (35 h6 ♕f7 36 ♕g5 ♕f6!? is less impressive for White) 35...♕xh5 36 ♕a8+ ♔g7 37 ♕xc6 e4 38 ♕e6 Black's e-pawn won't get far due to his weak king.

33 ♕e1 ♖g8

This loses material, but 33...e4 34 b3! opens the important attacking diagonal for White; after 34...♖g8 35 ♗b2+ ♔h7 36 ♖xg8 ♔xg8 (36...♕xg8 37 ♕xe4+) 37 ♕g3+ the h-pawn decides.

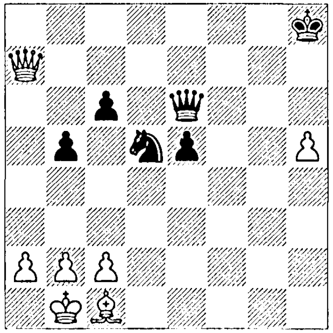
34 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8
35 ♕g1+ ♔h8
36 ♕xa7 *(D)*

White is a pawn up and the last phase of the game begins. By a combination of mating and simplification threats, Polgar will gradually neutralize Black's counterplay.

36 ... e4
37 h6 ♕e5

37...♕f6 is weaker since after 38 ♕g1 with the idea ♕g5, Black doesn't control e3.

38 ♕a8+ ♔h7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39 ♕b7+ ♔h8
40 ♕a8+

Repetition is a useful method of reaching the time-control. Instead, 40 ♕xc6? e3 gives Black too much play:

1) 41 ♕g6 e2 42 ♕g7+ (42 h7? ♘f6) 42...♕xg7 43 hxg7+ ♔xg7 44 ♗d2 ♘e3 45 b3 ♔f7 46 ♔b2 (after 46 a4 bxa4 47 bxa4 ♘xc2! 48 ♔xc2 ♔e6 Black's king reaches a8 in time) 46...♘g2 47 ♔c3 e1♕ 48 ♗xe1 ♘xe1 and with the king in the square of the a-pawn, Black draws.

2) 41 a3 is somewhat better, but even here after 41...e2 42 ♗d2 e1♕+ 43 ♗xe1 ♕xe1+ 44 ♔a2 ♕e5, White's winning chances have diminished considerably.

40 ... ♔h7
41 ♕a7+ ♔h8

41...♔g6?! 42 ♕g1+ saves White some moves.

42 ♕c5!

This move stops the e-pawn in its tracks. After 42 ♗e3? ♘xe3 43 ♕xe3 ♔h7 White would still require superb technique.

42 ... ♔h7

After 42...e3? 43 ♗xe3! ♕xe3 44 ♕f8+ White mates, while following 42...♕f6 Black doesn't control e3 any more and 43 ♕g1!? with the idea ♕g5 is sufficient to win.

43 ♗e3 ♕f6
44 ♕a7+ ♔g6

This is now clearly forced, as 44...♔g8? loses on the spot to 45 h7+.

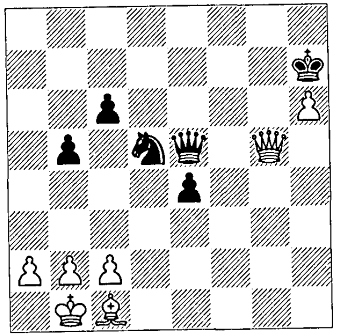
45 ♗c1!

White has made significant progress. Black's king is misplaced on g6 and the h-pawn has become truly dangerous.

45 ... ♕e5

Black has only this one last try left, as after 45...e3? 46 ♗xe3 White simply interposes on c1.

46 ♕g1+ ♔h7
47 ♕g5 *(D)*



This clinches the full point. Black can't avoid the exchange of queens and his knight will be helpless against passed pawns on both flanks, supported by a long-legged bishop.

47 ... ♕xg5

Otherwise White wins the e-pawn.

48 ♗xg5 c5

After other moves White also centralizes her king; e.g., 48...e3 49 ♔c1 ♔g6 50 ♔d1 e2+ 51 ♔e1! (the simplest, but 51 ♔xe2 ♔xg5 52 h7 ♘f4+ 53 ♔e3 ♘g6 54 ♔d4 also wins) 51...♘b4 52 ♗d2 ♘xc2+ 53 ♔xe2.

49 ♔c1 c4
50 a3 ♔g6

50...e3 51 ♔d1 ♔g6 52 b3 is also hopeless for Black; the a-pawn will divert the knight.

51 ♔d2 ♔h7
52 b3 cxb3
53 cxb3 ♔g6
54 ♗e3 1-0

The advance of the passed pawn will allow White to activate her king.

Summary

Delayed castling is one of the more complicated problems of contemporary chess strategy. Sometimes the idea is to postpone this decision until the opponent commits his own king, thus creating a possible target for our (counter)play. Since in the opening line featured in this game, White mostly castles queenside first, Black has a choice – either follow suit, taking White's space advantage into account, or go for a more risky queenside counterattack. In keeping with the modern tendency to seek activity as soon as possible (even as Black), Korchnoi leaves his king in the centre for the time being, aiming to acquire long-term strategic advantages in exchange (light-square control; dominant outpost on d5). All this is viable under one condition – that the king is safe. This is not the case here, as Polgar highlights with the fine 20 ♖h4!. When Black's king finally leaves e8, White is ready for him and unleashes a deadly attack. This could have culminated with the consistent 26 fxg5! – again the attacking, not the 'strategic' choice.

Another crucial moment in the game came after 31 ♗xg5. Black had to decide which sort of exchange would best lessen his defensive burden. In particular, exchanging off the minor pieces would improve Black's prospects, but even exchanging rooks or possibly queens would help. Although concrete analysis shows the exposed king and weakened pawns still remain the major factor, 31...♖g8 was nevertheless the best move. After 36 ♕xa7 all these considerations become superfluous, as Black in the long run can't prevent the exchange of queens, leading to a lost endgame.

Game 13

Vladimir Kramnik – Jeroen Piket

Dortmund 1995

Catalan Opening [E05]

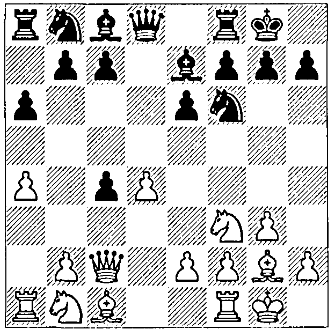
1 ♘f3 d5
2 d4 e6
3 g3 ♘f6
4 ♗g2 ♗e7

5 0-0 0-0
6 c4

The Catalan is a riskless opening, which requires from Black patient and gradual neutralization of White's edge. Not a bad choice with a half-point lead before the last round against an active player like Piket.

6 ... dxc4
7 ♕c2 a6
8 a4 *(D)*

Black's main problems in the Catalan are his passive c8-bishop and White's pressure on the h1-a8 diagonal. Therefore 8 ♕xc4 b5 9 ♕c2 ♗b7 is less demanding and Black's road to equality is more straightforward.



8 ... ♘c6?!

Although it immediately targets the weakened b4-square, this move leads to passive and cramped positions and doesn't address the problems outlined above:

1) The direct 8...c5 9 dxc5 ♘c6 10 ♘a3! (10 ♕xc4?! is weaker due to 10...e5) 10...♗xc5 11 ♘xc4 ♕e7 12 ♘ce5 is rather awkward for Black.

2) But the generally acclaimed and most popular continuation is 8...♗d7 9 ♕xc4 ♗c6 10 ♗g5 (10 ♘c3?! is inaccurate due to 10...b5!; Black's follow-up ...b4, ...♗d5 and ...c5 enables him to solve all his opening problems at once), when with the long diagonal under control Black can now play 10...♗d5 11 ♕d3 c5 12 ♘c3 (12 dxc5 ♘bd7 13 ♘c3 ♘xc5 14 ♕e3 ♕a5 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♕a3 ♗xg5 17 ♘xg5 h6 18 ♖fc1 ♘d7 19 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 20 ♖d1 ♕xg5 21 ♖xd7 b5 22 ♖ad1 ♖fd8 is even more drawish, Portisch-Ribli, Hungarian Cht 1997/8) 12...♗c6 13 ♖fd1 ♕a5!? 14 dxc5 ♘bd7 15 e4 ♗xc5 16 ♗e3 ♗xe3 17 ♕xe3 ♖fd8 18 ♖d4 ♘e5 19 b4 ♘xf3+ 20 ♗xf3 ♕e5 21 ♖ad1 ♖xd4 22 ♖xd4 ♖c8 with sterile equality, Beliavsky-Lutz, Bundesliga 1999/00.

9 ♕xc4 ♕d5
10 ♘bd2

Avoiding the exchange of queens costs White a valuable tempo: after 10 ♕d3 Black has a choice between 10...♖d8 11 ♘c3 ♕a5!? 12 ♕c4 ♕b4, achieving his goal after all, or 10...♘b4 11 ♕d1 c5 12 ♘c3 ♕h5 13 dxc5 ♕xc5 14 ♗e3 ♕a5, when thanks to his outpost on b4 he will be able to finish his development with ...♗d7-c6. On the other hand, White doesn't want to free the c8-bishop; 10 ♕xd5 exd5 11 ♗f4 ♗d6!? promises White little.

10 ... ♖d8
11 e3 ♕h5

This is inconsistent. Black decides to avoid the slightly worse endgame after 11...♕xc4 12 ♘xc4 ♗d7. It's true that White has more space and better central control; his edge after 13 ♘fe5 (13 b3!? ♗e8 14 ♗b2 is similar) 13...♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘d5 15 ♗d2 a5 16 ♖fc1 is small, but permanent. However, after the text-move White retains all the aforementioned pluses and will subject Black to a positional 'massage' anyway. Moreover, the queen will soon feel uncomfortable on h5.

12 e4! ♗d7
13 b3 b5
14 ♕c3 ♗e8

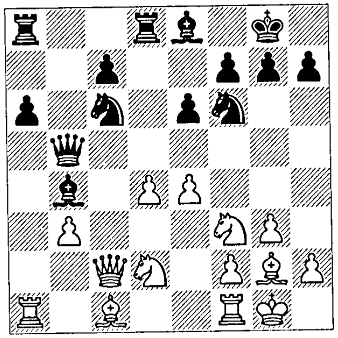
This is Black's first independent move and it's probably not ideal.

1) The old example went 14...bxa4 15 bxa4 (15 ♖xa4 a5!? is less clear) 15...♗b4 16 ♕c2 ♖ac8 (16...♗e8!? 17 ♘b3 ♘a5 is somewhat better) 17 ♘c4 ♗e8, Korchnoi-Tal, Moscow Ct (6) 1968, and now the solid 18 ♗b2 would have given White a substantial advantage. White has a mobile pawn-centre and it's imperative to put it under sufficient pressure; even a slight error might have serious consequences.

2) More energetic is 14...♗b4! 15 ♕c2 ♗e8 16 axb5 (16 ♗b2? ♗xd2 costs White a pawn) 16...♕xb5! *(D)*.

Now it's difficult to keep the centre intact:

2a) 17 e5 ♘d5 18 ♘g5 g6 gives Black good counterplay. b3 and d4 are weak and White's queen is too far from the kingside.



2b) Interesting is 17 ♘c4!? ♘xd4 (White is somewhat better after 17...♗e7!? 18 ♖d1) 18 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 19 e5 ♘d5 20 h3 (after 20 ♗b2 ♖g4 White can take the wayward rook only with his Catalan bishop). Now Black has to decide how to sacrifice material:

2b1) 20...♗c3 21 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 22 ♕xc3 ♖d3 23 ♕e1 (23 ♕a5? ♕f3 is too risky for White) 23...♗c6 24 f3 ♖xf3 25 ♔h2 ♖xb3 26 ♕f2. White has beaten off the attack and his extra piece gives him a slight edge.

2b2) After 20...♗e7 21 ♗b2 ♘b4 22 ♕b1 (22 ♕e2 is worse in view of 22...♖d5) 22...♖d5 23 ♘e3 White wins the exchange, but the position remains quite unclear.

15 axb5

A natural reaction. However, 15 h3!? with the idea that 15...♗b4 is met by 16 ♕e3 deserves a closer look. After 16...bxa4 17 bxa4 ♕g6 18 ♗b2 (18 ♘h4 ♕h6 is unclear) the centre is safe and Black's queen is in trouble; ♘h4 is already a threat.

15 ... axb5?!

15...♕xb5 16 ♗a3 is fine for White, but Black could have transposed to note '2' to Black's 14th move with 15...♗b4! 16 ♕c2 (16 ♕e3? is bad owing to 16...♘g4 followed by ...♘xd4).

16 ♖xa8 ♖xa8

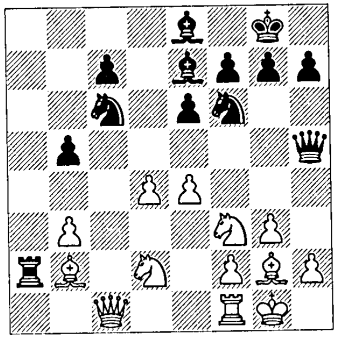
17 ♗b2

Kramnik has stabilized his centre and all the positional factors we have already mentioned are starting to work clearly in his favour. Moreover, Black's forces lack coordination, so his counterplay is ineffective.

17 ... ♖a2

18 ♕c1! *(D)*

Exchanges help the defence, so White doesn't play the mechanical 18 ♖a1?!, and instead retains the rook to further his central ambitions.



18 ... ♕h6

18...♗b4 is no better in view of 19 ♕b1.

19 h3 g6

Now after 19...♗b4 20 ♖d1 the d5 advance is already in the air, so Piket at least activates his queen. However, in doing so he weakens the dark squares, and later on this factor will prove decisive.

20 ♖e1

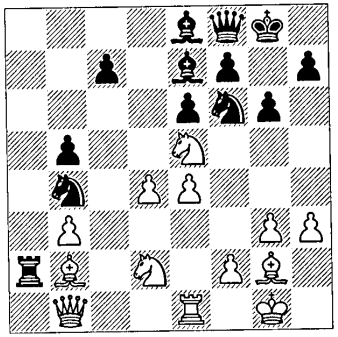
White is patient. 20 d5? is premature due to 20...exd5 21 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 22 exd5 ♘d4.

20 ... ♕f8

21 ♕b1 ♘b4?!

This pseudo-active move allows White to activate his pieces. The immediate 21...♖a6 was more prudent.

22 ♘e5 *(D)*



22 ... ♘d7

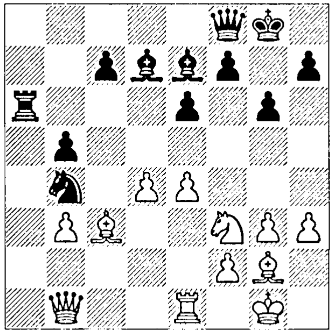
According to Kramnik, even now 22...♖a6!? was better; Black should have tried to keep the long diagonal covered.

23 ♗c3! ♖a6

23...♘xe5? loses at least an exchange to 24 ♗xb4.

24 ♘xd7 ♗xd7

25 ♘f3 *(D)*



White has repulsed Black's rook and his so far passive d2-knight is aiming for e5.

25 ... ♕a8?

Black can hardly afford to give up his dark-squared bishop with 25...♗f6 26 ♘e5 ♗xe5?! 27 dxe5, but the ugly 25...f6!? was more or less mandatory, although after 26 ♕d1 ♗c6 27 h4 the siege continues.

After the text-move White starts a direct attack.

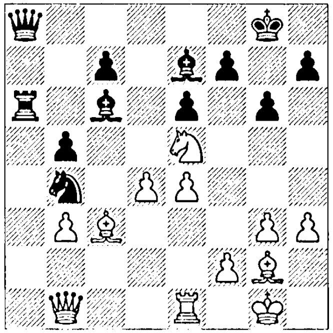
26 ♘e5 ♗c6 *(D)*

A futile attempt to stop the central break. However, Black's position is seriously compromised anyway, and after 26...♗e8 White has a pleasant choice:

1) The positional 27 ♕d1 ♘a2 (27...f6 28 ♘g4 threatens ♘xf6+ and d5; Black will not be able to keep the a1-h8 diagonal closed for long) 28 ♗b2 b4 29 ♕c2 is quite impressive even a tempo down. Black's offside knight will sooner or later cost him a pawn.

2) Even more tempting is the attacking 27 d5!?. Black can hardly afford to accept the sacrifice: 27...exd5 28 exd5 (28 ♘g4!? ♘a2 29 ♗b2, with the idea that 29...♗b4 is met by 30 exd5! ♗xe1 31 ♕xe1, is also possible) 28...♘xd5 29 ♕e4 c6 30 ♘g4 is extremely dangerous.

27 ♕d1



White is patient. However, the position was already ripe for 27 d5!?:

1) Now 27...exd5? 28 exd5 is suicidal for Black:

1a) 28...♘xd5 29 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 30 ♗b2! (30 ♗xd5? ♕xc3) and Black has no defence against the numerous threats: ♖xc7, ♗xd5, ♕d3, etc.

1b) 28...♗xd5 29 ♘xg6! hxg6 (29...♖xg6 30 ♖xc7 and 29...♗c5 30 ♘e7+ are similar) 30 ♖xc7 ♗xg2 31 ♕c1 and White's attack breaks through; e.g., 31...♗c6 32 ♕c5 ♔f8 33 ♖xc7.

2) 27...♗e8! is better. Now White can transpose into the game with 28 ♕d1, but 28 ♘g4!? h5 29 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 30 ♗xf6 exd5 31 ♗c3 ♘a2 32 ♗b2 is also interesting. Black's gaping dark-square holes are chronic; White just needs to activate his queen.

27 ... ♘a2

White was already threatening d5 followed by a timely ♕d4, so Black desperately tries to close the long diagonal. However, as we will see his knight could have got into grave trouble.

28 ♗b2 b4

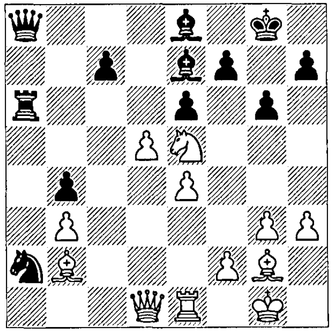
After 28...♗b4, 29 ♖e3 cuts off the knight's retreat.

29 d5

This move is logical and strong, but White had more than one equivalent alternative. Kramnik's 29 ♕c2 practically paralyses Black. 29 ♗f1!? is also very impressive: 29...♖b6 (Black loses material after both 29...♖a7 30 d5 exd5? 31 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 32 ♕d4 and 29...♖a5 30 ♕c2) 30 ♕f3 ♗e8 31 ♖a1! and the pin is lethal.

29 ... ♗e8 *(D)*

As we have already seen Black can't open the e-file; after 29...♗b7 30 ♕f3 ♕e8 31 ♘g4 the attack is overwhelming.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30 ♘g4?!

Only this move deserves to be condemned, as it squanders a part of White's advantage and offers Black chances to resist. 30 ♕c2 was still better, but 30 ♗f1! ♖d6 (30...♖a5 31 dxe6 fxe6 32 ♗c4 is no improvement for Black) 31 ♕a1! ♗f6 32 ♗c4 is practically winning by force. White has not only the usual threats on the long diagonal, but can also pick up the unhappy a2-knight by ♗d4 and ♖e2.

30 ... ♘c3
31 ♕f3

31 ♕d4 forces 31...h5 32 ♘f6+ (32 ♘e5 is weaker due to 32...♕a7! with the idea that 33 ♗xc3? is met by 33...♗c5) 32...♗xf6 33 ♕xf6, transposing into the game.

31 ... h5

31...♕d8 32 ♗xc3 bxc3 33 ♕xc3 h5 beats off the first wave of the attack, but after 34 ♘e3 White remains a sound pawn up.

32 ♘f6+

The less consistent 32 ♘e5 ♕a7!? 33 ♗xc3 (33 ♘c4 ♕d4 is unclear) 33...bxc3 34 ♕xc3 ♖a2 gives Black too much counterplay.

32 ... ♗xf6

Forced, since after 32...♔g7 33 ♘xe8+ ♕xe8 34 ♗xc3+ bxc3 35 ♕xc3+ ♗f6 36 e5 White has a material and positional advantage.

33 ♕xf6 exd5
34 ♕d4

After 34 ♕e7 Black has two ways to reach playable lines we'll investigate later on:

1) 34...♖e6 35 ♕xb4 transposes to the note to Black's 34th move.

2) Probably even better is 34...d4!? 35 ♕xb4 ♕a7! 36 ♗xc3 dxc3 37 ♕xc3 ♖a2, transposing to note '3b' to Black's 35th move.

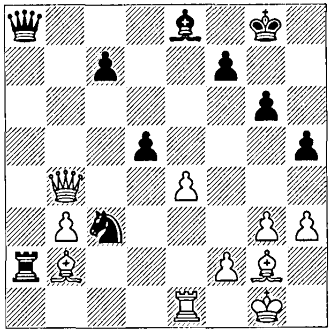
34 ... ♖a2

After 34...dxe4? 35 ♕xb4 Black's position falls to pieces, but possible is 34...♖e6 35 ♕xb4 (35 ♔h2? ♕a2 gets White nowhere) 35...♘xe4 36 ♕d4 f6 37 f3 c5 38 ♕d3 (38 ♕d1 is weaker, as it doesn't target g6), and now:

1) 38...♕a2 39 ♖e2! (39 ♕xd5 is less incisive, as after 39...♗f7, 40 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 41 ♕d8+ ♖e8 42 ♕xf6 ♔f8 43 ♕g7+ ♔e7 44 ♗f6+ ♔e6 45 ♗e5 ♕b1+ 46 ♗f1 ♕f5 47 ♗c4+ ♔e7 is a draw at best) 39...♘g5 40 ♕xd5 and Black loses at least a pawn.

2) The modest 38...♘g5 39 ♖xe6 ♘xe6 is necessary. After 40 f4 or 40 ♗xf6 White has an active bishop-pair and Black's kingside is very shaky, but the game is far from decided.

35 ♕xb4 *(D)*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35 ... ♘b5?

A mixture of optimism and time-trouble result in this decisive mistake. Let's look at the other moves:

1) 35...♖xb2 36 ♕xc3 ♕a2 (36...♖a2 is too passive in view of 37 exd5 ♕d8 38 ♕e5) 37 exd5 ♗b5 38 ♕c5 ♕xb3 39 ♕xc7 is insufficient to save the game.

2) Similar is 35...♘e2+ 36 ♖xe2 ♖xb2 37 ♖xb2 ♕a1+ 38 ♔h2 ♕xb2 39 ♕e7 ♗b5 40 ♕xc7 ♗d3!? 41 exd5 (41 ♕d8+?! ♔g7 42 ♕xd5 ♗c2 only complicates matters) 41...♕xf2 42 ♕b8+ ♔h7 43 ♕f4! ♕xf4 44 gxf4 and White should win the endgame after 44...♔g7 45 d6 ♗b5 46 ♔g3 ♔f6 47 ♗d5.

3) 35...d4! is by far the best chance:

3a) 36 e5 is an aggressive idea:

3a1) It succeeds after 36...♗c6? 37 e6! ♖xb2 (37...♗xg2 loses to 38 e7 ♗c6 39 ♕xd4) 38 ♗xc6 ♘e2+ (38...♕xc6 39 exf7+ ♔xf7 40 ♕e7+ mates) 39 ♖xe2 ♖b1+ 40 ♖e1! (40 ♔h2 ♕xc6 41 exf7+ ♔h7! 42 ♖e1 ♖xe1 43 ♕xe1 ♕f3 is only a draw) 40...♖xe1+ 41 ♕xe1 ♕xc6 42 e7 ♕e8 43 ♕e5 and with Black's queen pinned to e8 White wins easily.

3a2) 36...♕a7? fails to 37 ♕e7! ♕b8 38 ♗c1!, when the threat ♗h6 and ♕f6 decides.

3a3) However, Black has 36...♕a5! 37 ♗xc3 (after 37 ♕e7 ♖xb2 38 ♕xe8+ ♔g7 39 e6 ♕f5 40 f4 ♕c2! White has only a perpetual) 37...dxc3 38 ♕e7 ♕b5!? (after the impetuous 38...c2? 39 ♕xe8+ ♔g7 40 ♖f1 ♖a1 41 ♕c6! ♖xf1+ 42 ♗xf1 ♕d2 43 ♕f6+ ♔g8 44 ♗c4! c1♕+ 45 ♔h2 Black is forced to play 45...♕xc4 46 bxc4 ♕d4 47 ♕f4, when White has real winning chances in the queen ending) 39 e6 (39 ♖c1 ♖xf2! 40 ♔xf2 ♕b6+ 41 ♔f3 ♗c6+ leads to a perpetual; after 39 ♕xc7 c2 the passed pawn gives Black a lot of counterplay; e.g., 40 ♕c3 ♕d7) 39...fxe6 40 ♖c1 c2 41 ♗e4 ♗f7! 42 ♗xc2 ♕e5 43 ♖d1 ♖a1 44 ♗b1 ♔g7 with approximate equality.

3b) After 36 ♗xc3 dxc3 37 ♕xc3 ♕a7, converting the extra pawn into victory isn't going to be easy; it's certainly more than a matter of pure technique.

3c) 36 ♕xd4 ♖xb2 37 ♕xc3 ♕a2 leads to similar play.

36 ♗f6 ♕a7
37 ♖e3 d4

Forced; possibly Black had overlooked that he gets mated after 37...c5? 38 exd5!.

38 ♕e7!

White's pieces freely roam in the vicinity of Black's king. This energetic move is also forced; otherwise Black plays 38...c5, leading to an unclear position.

38 ... ♘d6!?

The passive 38...♕b8 39 ♖d3 ♖a6 (39...♘c3 40 ♗xd4 ♘e2+ 41 ♔h2 ♘xd4 42 ♖xd4 and ♖d8 decides) 40 e5! (40 ♗xd4? is too soft: 40...♖e6 41 ♕c5 ♘xd4 42 ♕xd4 ♗c6) 40...♖e6 41 ♕c5 c6 42 h4 is hopeless for Black in the long run, as after 42...♗d7 43 ♗h3 ♖xf6 44 ♗xd7 Black's rook is trapped. Piket's move is seemingly even worse.

39 ♖d3

39 ♖f3? is weak due to 39...d3, when Black comes in first after, e.g., 40 e5? d2 41 exd6 d1♕+ 42 ♔h2 ♖e2.

But what did Piket have in mind after the text-move? The d4-pawn is attacked and e5 is a threat.

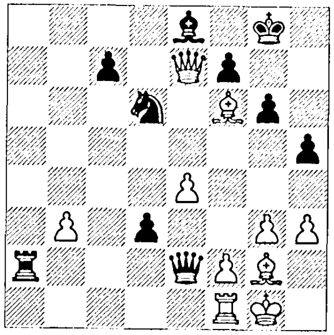
39 ... ♕a6!

This resourceful last-ditch attempt by Piket requires precision and full concentration from White.

40 ♖d1

The proverbial 40th move! 40 ♖xd4? ♕c2 and 40 ♗f1? ♖a1 are distinctly bad for White, while 40 e5? ♕xd3 41 exd6 ♖c2 42 ♗c5 ♕b5 is not much better. However, with more time at his disposal Kramnik would have found the faster and prettier win he demonstrated afterwards: 40 ♗g5! ♗c6 (40...♕xd3 41 ♗h6 ♔h7 42 ♕f8 mates) 41 ♗h6 ♔h7 42 ♕f8 ♘e8 43 ♖f3!? f5 44 ♗g5 and the attack triumphs.

40 ... ♕c2
41 ♖f1 d3 *(D)*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Black has activated his queen and his passed pawn is dangerous. However, the draught around his king still remains the decisive factor; White only has to coordinate the efforts of his queen and bishop.

42 ♗d4!

The decisive manoeuvre. After the time-control White is not going to fall for 42 e5? d2 43 exd6 d1♕ 44 ♖xd1 ♕xf2+. The text-move is neater than the alternative 42 ♗e5 d2 43 ♕f6 ♔f8 44 ♗f4! (44 ♗f3? d1♕!) 44...♗b5 45 ♗h6+ ♔e8 46 ♗g5 ♔d7 47 ♕d8+ ♔c6 48 e5+ ♘e4 49 ♗xd2.

42 ... d2

Black has no other moves.

43 ♕e5 ♔f8
44 ♗e3!

White's dark-squared battery flexibly shifts to the neighbouring diagonal.

44 ... ♔g8

44...f6 is the only alternative. After 45 ♕xf6+ ♗f7 46 ♗f3 Black's counterplay is stopped and the attack breaks through.

45 ♗h6

Now Black has only desperate tries.

45 ... ♕xf2+

45...♘f5 46 ♕xe8+ ♔h7 47 ♕xf7+ ♔xh6 48 exf5 gxf5 49 ♕f6+ ♔h7 50 ♕xf5+ is also hopeless for Black.

46 ♖xf2

46 ♔xf2 d1♕+ 47 ♔g1 leads to the same position.

46 ... d1♕+
47 ♖f1

47 ♔h2? allows 47...♕a1, but after the text-move the checks end quickly.

47 ... ♖xg2+
48 ♔xg2 ♕e2+
49 ♔g1 1-0

Summary

With the somewhat inferior move 8...♘c6?! and especially with 11...♕h5 Black spurned the main lines in favour of a risky and demanding strategy: restraint and play against a mobile pawn-centre. This became White's main asset, especially after the mechanical 15...axb5?!. Kramnik purposefully improved his position; particularly instructive in this sense is 18 ♕c1!. White realized he needed his rook and kept the axiom 'exchanges help the defence' on his mind, while Piket repeatedly sinned against it. The first moment was the rejection of 11...♕xc4, but much more serious was the decisive mistake 35...♘b5?, an unjustified attempt to keep the pieces on the board.

The critical moment in the game came after 25...♕a8?. Deserting the weakened kingside is certainly misguided and indeed White swiftly built up an irresistible attack. However, compared with Game 12 the attack is not White's only plus and he should have combined the play on the a1-h8 diagonal with other motifs (pressure on the c-file; pinning the a2-knight). Thus 30 ♘g4?! lost part of the advantage, but White's position was too strong for this one move to give everything away. Piket could have made Kramnik's task more difficult with 35...d4!, further proof that even highly suspicious positions can contain hidden defensive resources. After 35...♘b5? the main theme of the game from move 25 onwards finally prevailed again. Even despite White missing 40 ♗g5!, Black's king was trapped so tightly that the queen and bishop alone could dispatch him on the weak dark squares.

Game 14

Vladimir Kramnik – Rafael Vaganian

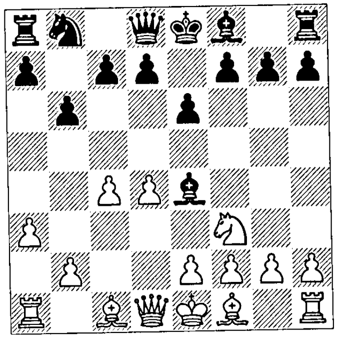
Horgen 1995

Queen's Indian Defence [E12]

1 ♘f3 ♘f6
2 d4 e6
3 c4 b6
4 a3 ♗b7
5 ♘c3 ♘e4

A somewhat passive continuation; for the common alternative 5...d5 see Khalifman-Short, Pärnu 1996 (Game 17).

6 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 *(D)*



7 e3

After 7 ♗f4 Black's best bet is 7...♗e7 8 e3 d6 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3 a5! (an important move, which slows down White's queenside expansion) 11 b3 ♘d7 12 e4 0-0 13 0-0 ♖e8 14 ♖fd1 ♕c8 15 ♖e1 ♕b7 16 ♖ad1 ♖ab8 17 d5 ♗f6, P.Cramling-Portisch, London (Ladies vs Veterans) 1996. Although White has a space advantage, Black's set-up is very solid and with only two pairs of minor pieces on the board it's not easy to make any concrete inroads. Kramnik wants to achieve a similar position without committing his bishop to f4, as it can be better placed on e3 or even b2.

Nevertheless, the text-move is rather tame and the most principled continuation even nowadays is 7 ♘d2!? ♗b7 8 e4, occupying the centre. Although the pawn phalanx is still vulnerable due to the temporarily misplaced d2-knight, White can afford to sacrifice material effectively due to his development advantage: 8...♕f6 (the more restrained approach with 8...d6 9 ♗d3 ♘d7 10 0-0 g6 11 ♘f3 gives White a lot of space and a solid plus) 9 d5 ♗c5 10 ♘f3 and now:

1) 10...exd5 11 cxd5 ♕g6 12 ♗d3! ♕xg2 13 ♖f1 c6 14 b4 cxd5 15 exd5 ♗e7 16 ♗b2 ♗xd5 17 ♗e2 ♗b7 18 ♖g1 ♕h3 19 ♖xg7 ♕h6 was played in Glek-Krasenkov, USSR 1985. At this point 20 ♖g3 ♗f6 21 ♘e5!, with the threat ♘g4, would have given White a very strong attack.

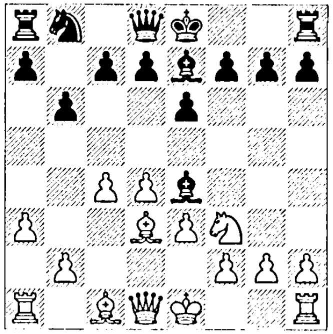
2) 10...♕g6 11 b4! ♕xe4+ 12 ♗e2 ♗e7 13 0-0 0-0 (Black can hardly survive 13...exd5 14 ♖e1 dxc4 15 ♗b2 unscathed) 14 ♗d3 ♕g4. This position has arisen in a few games, but no one has yet played 15 ♗xh7+!? ♔xh7 (after 15...♔h8 16 ♗c2 ♕xc4 17 ♘e5 ♕h4 18 ♖e1 the rook joins in via e4 or e3 with decisive effect) 16 ♘g5+ ♕xg5 17 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 18 ♕h5+ (or 18 ♕d3+). Despite approximate material equality, White has good attacking prospects since Black's queenside is still sound asleep.

7 ... ♗e7

Natural enough, but both 7...c5 8 ♗d3 (8 d5 is weaker due to 8...exd5 9 cxd5 ♕f6!) 8...♗xd3 9 ♕xd3 cxd4 10 ♕xd4 ♘c6 11 ♕d3 d5 and 7...g6!? deserve serious attention.

8 ♗d3 *(D)*
8 ... d5!?

Black logically wants to maintain the central outpost gained by his 5...♘e4 sortie and 8...f5? 9 ♗xe4 fxe4 10 ♘d2 d5 11 ♕g4 ♔f7 12 f3 certainly isn't the way to do it. However, the text-move is very demanding and riskier than the more sedate 8...♗xd3 9 ♕xd3 d5 10 ♗d2! 0-0 11 0-0 c6?! 12 ♖ac1 ♗d6 13 e4 ♖e8 14 cxd5 cxd5 15 exd5 exd5 16 ♘g5 g6 17 ♕h3 h5 18 ♕f3 ♕d7 19 ♗f4 ♗xf4 20 ♕xf4, when Black was a long way from full equality in Andersson-Petursson, Reykjavik (World Cup) 1988. Black's play can be improved (11...♘d7!?), but White should still keep some edge.



9 ♗xe4!

Kramnik opts for the most ambitious plan: he intends to occupy the centre by exchanging off anything black on e4.

9 ... dxe4
10 ♘d2 f5
11 f3

Good timing is required; after 11 0-0 c5!? 12 dxc5 ♗xc5 Black has no problems.

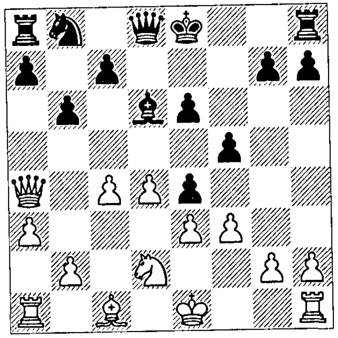
11 ... ♗d6

Now 11...e5? 12 ♕a4+ forces Black to give up either material or castling rights. After 11...e5 12 fxe4 exd4 13 exf5 0-0 (13...dxe3 loses to 14 ♕h5+! g6 15 fxg6 exd2+ 16 ♗xd2) 14 e4 Black has little to show for the sacrificed pawn. The simple 11...exf3 12 ♕xf3 c6 (12...♘d7 13 ♕c6! ♗d6 14 b4 e5 15 c5 or 15 0-0 is dangerous for Black) gives White a comfortable advantage with a choice of appealing plans: 13 b3, followed by ♗b2, 0-0, or 0-0-0 and e4; or possibly even 13 b4!? with ideas such as c5 and ♘c4. Therefore Vaganian strives for complications.

12 ♕a4+ *(D)*

12 0-0 ♕h4 13 f4 (13 ♕a4+? b5!) allows Black to achieve the blockade in better circumstances; he can even contemplate a move like 13...g5!?. White must put general considerations aside to get something tangible, but his

choice is not ideal either. Interesting is 12 fxe4 ♕h4+ 13 g3!? (13 ♔e2 fxe4 14 g3 ♕h5+ 15 ♔f2 0-0+ 16 ♔g2 ♕g6 17 ♕c2 ♕h5! forces repetition, because 18 ♖e1? loses to 18...♖f2+) 13...♗xg3+ 14 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 15 ♔d3 ♕xd1 16 ♖xd1 ♗xh2!? (an enterprising sacrifice; after 16...fxe4+ 17 ♘xe4 ♗xh2 18 ♘g5 ♔e7 19 e4!? the problems with the bishop persist and White has a dangerous initiative) 17 e5 h5 18 ♖h1 (18 ♘f1 ♗xe5 19 dxe5 ♘c6 is similar) 18...♗g3! 19 ♘f1 ♗xe5 20 dxe5 ♘c6 21 ♔e2 g5 with an unclear situation. An older recipe that definitely deserves attention is 12 g3!? ♕g5 13 ♕e2 ♕h5 14 fxe4 ♗xg3+ 15 ♔d1 ♕xe2+ 16 ♔xe2 ♗h4 17 b4 ♘d7 18 ♗b2 0-0 19 ♖hg1, Chandler-G.Lee, British Ch (Brighton) 1980. White has a pleasant position with his broad pawn-centre.



12 ... c6?

Kramnik condemns this move and recommends 12...♘d7!; the following lines originate partly from his notes. He is certainly right, if only for the reason that after the text-move Black will not manage to move the knight until the very end. Then:

1) 13 fxe4?! is an ambitious move, but risky: 13...♕h4+ 14 g3 (14 ♔d1 ♕g4+ 15 ♔c2 ♕xg2 16 ♖f1 fxe4 17 ♕c6 ♔e7! can be better only for Black, as his pieces enter the fray faster) 14...♗xg3+ 15 ♔d1 and now:

1a) 15...fxe4 16 ♕c6 0-0-0 17 ♕xe4 (17 ♘xe4 ♕g4+ 18 ♔c2 ♘b8 is risky for White) 17...♕xe4 18 ♘xe4 ♗h4 and compared with the Chandler-Lee game in the note to White's 12th move, Black has some extra tempi and easy equality.

1b) However, Black can already fight for more: 15...♕h5+ 16 ♔c2 ♗f2 17 ♕c6 0-0-0 looks promising.

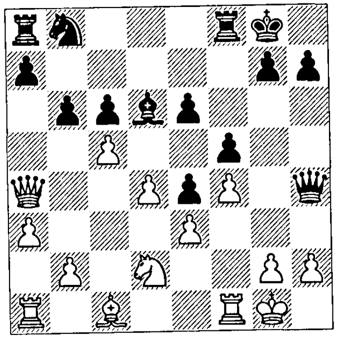
1c) The sharper 15...♗f2!? is maybe even better: 16 ♕c6 (the point is the pretty bishop slalom 16 ♔e2 ♗g1! 17 ♖xg1 ♕xh2+ 18 ♔f1 fxe4 19 ♖xg7 0-0-0! with a powerful attack) 16...0-0-0 17 ♔e2 ♖hf8! (here 17...♗g1 18 ♖xg1 ♕xh2+ 19 ♔f1 fxe4 allows 20 ♕a8+! ♘b8 21 ♕xe4 ♖hf8+ 22 ♘f3 ♖f6 23 ♖g4 and while a human would probably be scared stiff, *Fritz* is happy) 18 e5 ♗xe3 19 ♔xe3 ♕g5+ 20 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 21 ♕f3 (21 ♔e3? f4+ 22 ♔f2 f3! 23 ♘xf3 ♘b8 and the attack breaks through) 21...♕xd4. White has problems with his king and piece coordination and it's only a question of how large Black's advantage is.

2) That leaves only the softer 13 0-0 exf3 14 ♘xf3 0-0 15 ♕c6 ♕e8 with approximate equality.

13 0-0 ♕h4?!

But this is really the last straw. Black should have resigned himself to 13...exf3 14 ♘xf3 0-0 15 b4, although White is then considerably better. After the text-move, it will be carnage.

14 f4 0-0
15 c5! *(D)*



This nice sacrificial break enables White to activate practically his whole army in record time. From now on Black's back is against the wall and in a higher sense White is virtually winning.

15 ... bxc5

15...♗c7 16 cxb6 ♗xb6 17 ♘c4 gives White a similar position for free.

16 ♘c4 ♕e7

The queen is needed at home; 16...♗c7 17 dxc5 ♕e7 18 b4 is disastrous for Black.

17 dxc5

White of course ignores the greedy 17 ♘b6? axb6 18 ♕xa8 cxd4 19 exd4 ♕c7 20 ♕a4 ♘d7, when Black has more than enough for the exchange.

17 ... ♗xc5
18 b4 ♗d6
19 ♗b2!

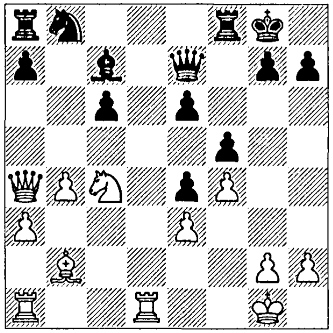
Even now Kramnik refuses to be tempted by premature material gain and consistently continues his development. Nevertheless, 19 ♘b6 axb6 20 ♕xa8 deserves attention. Now 20...b5 21 ♗b2 ♕c7 22 ♖ac1 saves the queen and 20...♕c7 21 ♕a4 ♘d7 22 ♕b3 ♖e8 23 a4 ♘f6 24 ♗d2 is no good for Black either; with the distant passed a-pawn White has a sizeable advantage. However, Black has other continuations such as 20...c5 and especially 20...e5!?. Therefore Kramnik is right not to get distracted from increasing the pressure by the prospect of material gain.

19 ... ♗c7

19...a6 20 ♖fd1 ♗c7 21 ♗d4 is worse for Black, while 19...c5 20 ♖fd1 ♗c7 just transposes to the game.

20 ♖fd1 *(D)*

Now 20 ♗d4 is not too impressive due to 20...♖d8 21 ♖fd1 ♖d5.



20 ... c5

20...♖d8 21 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 22 ♖d1 does nothing for the activation of the queenside pieces; moreover, without his defensive rook on f8 Black can soon expect problems preventing an invasion via the d-file.

21 bxc5

21 ♕b5!? would win the pawn back; after 21...♕e8 22 ♕xc5 ♘a6 23 ♕d4 ♖f7 24 ♖ac1 Black has unravelled his pieces slightly, but White still retains a large advantage. Kramnik's direct move is also strong.

21 ... ♕xc5
22 ♖ac1 ♕e7

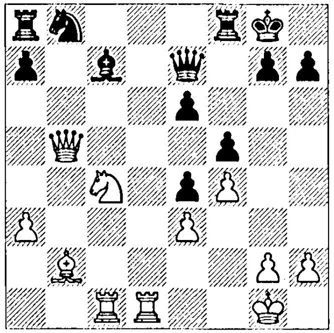
After 22...♕c6 White has two options:

1) 23 ♕xc6 ♘xc6 24 ♘d2 ♖ab8! (24...♗b6 25 ♖xc6 ♗xe3+ 26 ♔f1 ♗xf4 27 g3 doesn't give Black enough for the piece) 25 ♖xc6 (25 ♗a1 ♗b6!) 25...♖xb2 26 ♘c4 (26 ♖xc7 ♖d8 is drawish) 26...♖b7 27 ♖xe6 is only slightly better for White at best.

2) 23 ♕b3! ♕e8 24 ♘d6 ♗xd6 25 ♖xd6 is the right way, when White has a clear advantage.

23 ♕b5 *(D)*

White continues to limit Black's options: each move contains a direct threat. The large difference between the scope of the two forces is far more important than the extra doubled pawn.



23 ... ♗b6?!

Vaganian is willing to return the pawn, but now Black should have lost in a clear-cut fashion. The only plausible defence against ♕b7 was 23...a5. Now 24 ♕b7 gets White nowhere in view of 24...♘a6 25 ♘e5 ♗d6. White has more than one way to take the a-pawn (e.g., 24 ♗d4 ♖d8 25 ♗b6 or 24 a4 ♖d8 25 ♗c3), but perhaps the best continuation is 24 ♘e5!? ♗d6 25 a4. Black still can't get his knight out and White will double his rooks on one of the central files depending on the circumstances. A line like 25...♗a3 26 ♗xa3 ♕xa3 27 ♘c4 ♕b4

28 ♕e5 ♖a6 29 ♘d6 ♕b3 30 ♖b1 ♕xe3+ 31 ♔h1 illustrates Black's problems, but can hardly be called forced.

24 a4?!

White is much better after 24 ♘xb6 axb6 (24...♕b7? loses to 25 ♕e5) 25 ♕xb6, with his long-range bishop and active rooks. Kramnik rightly feels he can claim more; only the execution is wrong: 24 ♗e5! ♗c5 (there is nothing else; the threat was ♘xb6 and ♖c7, while 24...♕c5 loses at once to 25 ♕b3) 25 ♖b1! ♖c8 (25...h6 26 ♕b7 is decisive) 26 ♗xb8 ♖axb8 27 ♕xb8 ♖xb8 28 ♖xb8+ ♔f7 29 ♘e5+ ♔f6 30 ♖d7 ♗xe3+ 31 ♔f1 and White wins; he winds up with an extra rook.

24 ... ♗c5

Bad is 24...♖d8? 25 a5 ♖xd1+ 26 ♖xd1 ♗c5 (26...♗d8 loses nicely to 27 ♕b7!) 27 a6! and again ♕b7 decides.

25 ♗d4

White exchanges Black's only active piece. This move is in fact more or less forced, since Black's intention was ...a6 and ...♘d7, and after 25 a5 a6 26 ♕a4 ♖a7 27 ♗e5 ♖b7 he would have nothing to fear.

25 ... ♗xd4

Shouldn't Black have finally developed his knight? After 25...♘d7 26 ♗xg7! (26 ♕b7 ♘f6 and 26 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 27 ♘e5 ♘d3 lead nowhere for White) the bishop is taboo:

1) 26...♕xg7 27 ♖xd7 ♗e7 28 ♘e5 is hopeless for Black.

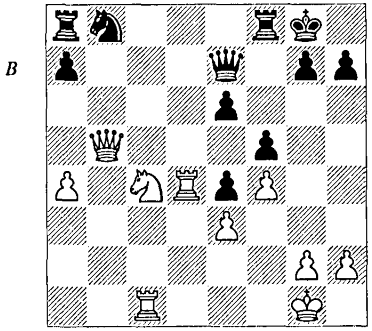
2) 26...♖fd8 27 ♗h6! (27 ♗a1 h6 28 ♕b2 ♔h7 is not so convincing) 27...♖ab8 (27...♘f6 28 ♗g5 ♖xd1+ 29 ♖xd1 ♖c8 30 ♕b2 ♖f8 31 ♕e5! puts Black in zugzwang) 28 ♖xd7! ♕xd7 29 ♕xc5 ♖dc8 30 ♕e5 ♖b4 31 ♕f6 and as Black can't exploit the pin, White will calmly prepare ♘e5 with h3.

3) 26...♖f7 27 ♗a1 ♖d8!? (after 27...♘f8 28 ♔h1! ♘g6 29 ♕c6 ♖af8 30 ♖b1 Black is doomed, as White controls all the important files and diagonals) is Black's best (the point is that 28 ♕b2 is met by 28...♘f6) and enables him to fight on, although White is clearly on top. As we will see below, Black can still do better than that.

26 ♖xd4 *(D)*

26 ... a6!

The best move, although in the game it was unfortunately connected with an incorrect idea.



26...♖d8? 27 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 28 ♕b7 is simple enough, while much more complex is 26...♖c8 27 ♖cd1 ♘c6 (otherwise ♘e5 paralyses Black) 28 ♖d7, with a bewildering choice for Black:

1) 28...♕f6 loses at least an exchange to 29 ♘d6 ♖ab8 30 ♕c5.

2) 28...♕e8 29 ♕b7 ♕f8 30 ♘d6 ♘a5 (or 30...♖ab8 31 ♕a6 ♘b4 32 ♕xa7 ♖a8 33 ♕d4 ♘c2 34 ♕e5 and White wins) 31 ♕a6 ♖d8 32 ♘b5 ♖xd7 33 ♖xd7 gives White a winning attack.

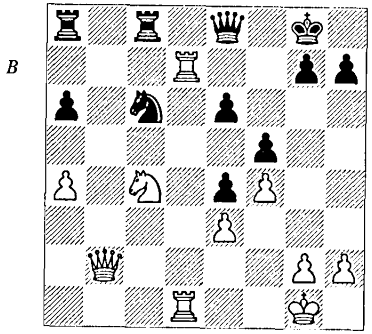
3) 28...a6 29 ♕b7! ♕f6 (29...♕f8 30 ♘d6 ♘d8 31 ♕xc8 ♖xc8 32 ♘xc8 ♘c6 33 ♘e7+ is a matter of technique) 30 ♘d6 ♘a5 (30...♘d8 31 ♕xc8 ♖xc8 32 ♘xc8 ♘f7 33 ♘e7+ ♔f8 34 ♖b1 with model coordination) 31 ♕b4 ♖d8 32 ♘xe4 fxe4 33 ♕xa5 ♖xd7 34 ♖xd7 with excellent winning chances for White, as his king is safer and Black's e-pawns are weak.

4) 28...♖ab8!? 29 ♕xc6 (29 ♖xe7 ♖xb5 30 ♖xe6 ♖c5 is only equal) 29...♖xc6 30 ♖xe7 ♖xc4 31 ♖dd7 ♖c1+ 32 ♔f2 ♖c2+ 33 ♔g3 ♔h8 34 ♔h3! (34 ♖xg7?! ♖g8 35 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 36 ♖xa7 ♖e2 draws) 34...♖g8 35 ♖xa7 and again White has realistic winning chances.

27 ♕b6 ♖a7?

This move loses. As above, Black had to try 27...♖c8 28 ♖cd1 ♘c6 29 ♖d7 ♕e8! (29...♕f6 is bad due to 30 ♘d6 ♖ab8 31 ♕c5; 29...♕f8 loses to 30 ♘d6 ♖ab8 31 ♕c5, intending ♕c4 while knight moves allow ♕e5) 30 ♕b2 *(D)* (30 ♕b7 ♖a7! 31 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 is only a draw; Black didn't have this possibility in note '3' to Black's 26th move) and now:

1) 30...♕g6 31 ♖1d6! ♕g4 (Black is defenceless against ♖xe6 or ♘b6; he loses immediately after 31...♖ab8? 32 ♖xc6 or 31...♘d8 32 ♘b6 ♖cb8 33 ♘xa8!) 32 ♘b6 ♖ab8 33 ♕a2 ♖xb6 34 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 35 ♖d8+! with a back-rank mate.



2) 30...♘e7 31 ♕e5 ♕g6 32 ♖xe7 ♖xc4 33 ♖xe6 ♖c5 34 ♕d6 is dreary for Black.

3) The issue still remains open only after 30...♕f8! 31 ♘d6 (31 ♘b6 ♖ab8 32 ♕b3 ♔h8 and the pin on the b-file is very annoying; 31 ♕b7 ♖a7 32 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 is again only a draw) 31...♖d8 32 ♕b7!? (32 ♖c7 ♖ab8 33 ♕a1 ♘b4 34 ♖f7 ♕xf7 35 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 gives Black drawing chances) 32...♖xd7 33 ♕xd7 ♘d8. Even though Black can hardly move, White has yet to deal the final blow.

28 ♘d6 ♖d7

Now White realizes his main threat, but after 28...♖a8 29 ♖c7 ♘d7 (29...♕h4 30 g3 ♕g4 31 ♘c4 thwarts all hopes) 30 ♕a5!? his knight lands in an unbreakable pin. A possible line, unforced but pretty, is 30...♖ab8 31 ♘b7 ♕a3 32 ♖dxd7 ♕xe3+ 33 ♔h1 ♖xb7 34 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 35 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 36 ♖h8+! ♔xh8 37 ♕e5+ with mate.

29 ♖c8 *(D)*

After 29 ♘c8? Black still has the resource 29...♕a3!. However, the text-move spells the end for Black's knight and the game.

29 ... ♖xc8

29...♖dd8 is met by 30 ♘xf5.

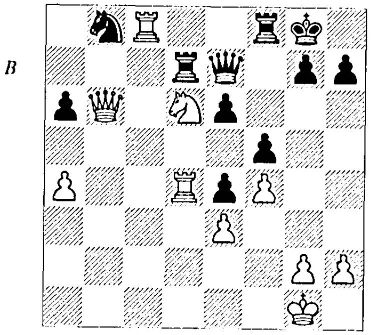
30 ♘xc8 ♕a3

This desperate counterattack is Black's last chance; after 30...♕e8 31 ♕xb8 he is simply a piece down.

31 ♕xe6+ ♔f8

32 ♕xf5+ ♔e8

32...♔g8 33 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 (33...♕xe3+ 34 ♔f1 and the king escapes all the way to h4; Black can't even take the rook due to ♕e6+ with mate) 34 ♕e6+ and White wins (34...♔f8 transposes to the next note).



33 ♕e6+ ♔d8

33...♔f8 loses to 34 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 35 ♕xd7 (35 ♔f2!?) 35...♕xe3+ 36 ♔f1 ♕xf4+ 37 ♔e2; Black has no checks.

34 ♕b6+! ♔e8

35 ♘d6+

After 35 ♖xc4+ ♔f8 36 ♕xb8 Black has only a few checks; the text-move doesn't allow even that.

1-0

35...♔c7 36 ♖xc4+ mates, while 35...♖xd6 36 ♖xd6 ♘d7 37 ♕d4 is hopeless for Black.

Summary

In the opening everything revolved around the e4-square. With 5...♘e4 and especially 8...d5!? Black created an outpost that required very clever tactical maintenance. Both players perfectly understood that 'natural' moves such as 11 0-0, 12 0-0 or 11...exf3 would concede the initiative in this fight and were on the lookout for extraordinary methods. Kramnik's 12 ♕a4+ was inaccurate; deserting the vulnerable king, who may be unable to castle, was asking for trouble. Black returned the favour by refraining from the natural developing move 12...♘d7!. In the tactical skirmishes then arising after 13 fxe4?! both sides would need all the pieces they could muster and it would actually have been White who experienced problems activating his forces. Once he had played 12...c6?, Black should have flexibly conceded e4, as 13...♕h4?! lost more time. Although in a closed position this element is rather relative, in our game 15 c5! quickly opened up the play and suddenly the white pieces were swarming all over the place.

From move 15 onwards White inexorably surrounded and limited Black's forces, ignoring offered material no fewer than four times. Vaganian's 23...♗b6?! shouldn't be too harshly criticized, as mistakes under such pressure are more or less inevitable and the superior 23...a5 looks like a very ugly move, which probably provides only temporary relief anyway. On the other hand the reason why 24 a4?! was inaccurate is clear: White not only missed a win, but had also to exchange his proud bishop. Black was the last one to err; after 27...♖a7? Kramnik wrapped up the game forcefully. The comparison between the respective positions after the alternatives 23...a5 and 27...♖c8 is interesting. In the second case Black's survival chances would be better, mainly due to the simplified nature of the position and the fact that the knight has finally been able to leave b8.

Game 15

Alexei Shirov – Peter Leko

Investbanka tournament, Belgrade 1995

Ruy Lopez (Spanish), Zaitsev Variation [C92]

1 e4 e5
2 ♘f3 ♘c6
3 ♗b5 a6
4 ♗a4 ♘f6
5 0-0 ♗e7
6 ♖e1 b5
7 ♗b3 d6
8 c3 0-0
9 h3 ♗b7

Many great players of the past have contributed to the theory of the Closed Ruy Lopez, creating whole systems of their own – Chigorin, Breyer and Smyslov to name the most important in chronological order. Black's move bears the name of Igor Zaitsev and is a flexible conglomerate of the two variations mentioned last, and it does sometimes transpose into one of them. Its popularity peaked during the Kasparov-Karpov matches, when it became a major theme of a heated theoretical duel. Nowadays interest has waned somewhat.

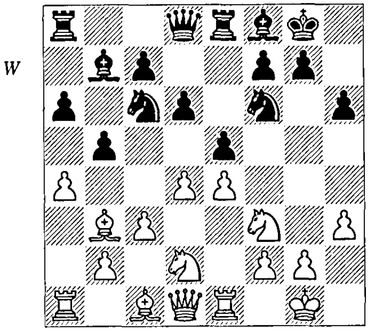
10 d4 ♖e8
11 ♘g5 ♖f8
12 ♘f3

White's sortie was just a harmless demonstration, aiming to make some extra moves in case of time-trouble. It's well-known that the impetuous continuation 12 f4 exf4 13 ♗xf4 ♘a5 14 ♗c2 ♘d5! 15 exd5 ♗xg5 16 ♕h5 h6 17 ♘d2!? ♗xd5 18 ♘e4 ♗xf4 19 ♕f5 g6 20 ♘f6+ ♔g7 21 ♘h5+ ♔h8 22 ♕xf4 ♕g5 23 ♕xg5 hxg5 24 ♘f6 ♗e6 promises White no more than equality, Grünfeld-P.Nikolić, Lugano 1987.

12 ... ♖e8
13 a4

After 13 ♘bd2 ♗f8 14 ♗c2 Black can transpose into the Breyer schemes with 14...♘b8, while 14...g6!? is an independent alternative.

13 ... h6
14 ♘bd2 ♗f8 *(D)*



15 ♗c2

White enters a complicated labyrinth. A different plan, introduced by 15 d5!?, has been advocated by Jansa. All possible knight moves have been tried; the best is probably 15...♘b8:

1) 16 ♕e2 ♘bd7! (16...c6?! 17 dxc6 ♗xc6 18 axb5 ♗xb5 19 c4 ♗c6 20 ♗a4 gives White a marked advantage) 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 19 ♕xb5 ♘c5 20 ♗c2 ♗a6 21 ♕a5 ♗d3 22 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 23 b4!? ♗xc2 24 bxc5 ♘d7! 25 cxd6 cxd6 26 ♘f1 ♘c5 27 ♘g3 ♖a4 and in Jansa-Z.Almasi, Austrian Cht 1994/5, Black regained the pawn with excellent play.

2) 16 c4 c6 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 19 cxb5!? (19 dxc6 bxc4 is OK for Black) 19...cxd5 20 exd5 occurred in Svidler-Z.Almasi, Dortmund 1998. Then 20...♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 22 ♘c4 ♘b6 23 ♘fxe5 ♕c7! would have led to approximate equality, so the burden of proof therefore rests on White. Just a technical remark – due to the insertion of ♘f3-g5-f3 and ...♖e8-f8-e8, the numbering of moves in the games may differ from reality; this also goes for the following notes.

15 ... exd4
16 cxd4

After 16 ♘xd4 b4 (16...g6!? is playable as well) 17 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 18 cxb4 ♕b8 Black takes his pawn back with a good position.

16 ... ♘b4
17 ♗b1 c5

Currently this natural move is unanimously considered the best. The last high-level tests of 17...g6 and 17...♕d7 took place eight months before our game in the PCA Candidates final Anand-Kamsky and were not too encouraging for Black. A more worthy candidate for revival seems to be Karpov's former favourite 17...bxa4 18 ♖xa4 a5 19 ♖a3 ♖a6 20 ♘h2 g6 21 f3, when Kasparov's recommendation 21...♗g7!? 22 ♘c4 ♕a8 23 d5 ♖d8 24 ♗d2 c6 25 dxc6 ♘xc6 26 ♖d3 d5 27 exd5 ♘b4! gave Black sufficient counterplay in Liss-Shvidler, Tel-Aviv 1991.

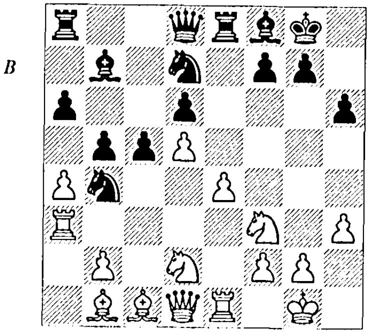
18 d5 ♘d7
19 ♖a3 *(D)*

The older move 19 ♘f1 is weaker due to 19...f5! 20 exf5 ♘f6. Compared with the game continuation, both White's rook and knight are worse placed.

19 ... f5!?

Black must do something committal, as otherwise White, with his strong centre, can prepare a kingside attack. This double-edged thrust blows White's centre apart but seriously weakens the king's defences. Other possible moves are:

1) 19...bxa4 20 ♖xa4 a5 21 ♖a3 ♗a6 (the alternative 21...g6?! is weaker due to 22 ♘c4) 22 ♘h2! g6 23 ♘df3 is not ideal for Black.



2) Even the slightly modified move-order 19...g6 20 ♘h2 ♗g7 21 ♘df3 bxa4 (21...♘f6?! 22 a5 strands the b4-knight, so Black takes now, without having to worry about ♘c4) 22 ♘g4 h5 23 ♘h6+ ♔f8 24 ♕d2!? gives White dangerous tactical chances.

3) The main alternative 19...c4 has passed extensive analytical and practical tests and currently Black's best bet seems to be 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♘d4 ♘e5!? (after 21...♖xa3 22 bxa3 ♘d3 23 ♗xd3 cxd3 24 ♖e3 Black hasn't fared well) 22 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 23 ♘xb5 ♖c8! 24 ♘a3 ♗a6 25 ♖e3 ♘bd3 26 ♗xd3 cxd3 27 b3 ♗e7 with sufficient play for the pawn, de Firmian-A.Ivanov, USA Ch (Parsippany) 1996.

20 exf5

White also has a wider choice. After 20 ♘h2 ♘f6 even time hasn't diminished the value of Karpov's recipes; 21 ♖ae3 ♕d7 and 21 ♖f3 ♖e5! are both OK for Black. The wild but dangerous 21 g4 was well met by Black in one of the more recent relevant Zaitsev games: 21...fxe4 22 g5 hxg5 23 ♘xe4 ♘bxd5 (23...♗xd5?! is substantially worse in view of 24 ♗xg5 ♗xe4 25 ♖xe4!; later on we will see that Black must always very carefully ponder whether he can afford the exchange of his light-squared bishop) 24 ♗xg5 ♕d7! 25 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 26 ♘xf6+ gxf6 27 ♘g4?! ♗g7 28 ♖g3 ♖xe1+ 29 ♕xe1 ♔f8 and White's compensation is insufficient, Leko-Z.Almasi, Dortmund 1998.

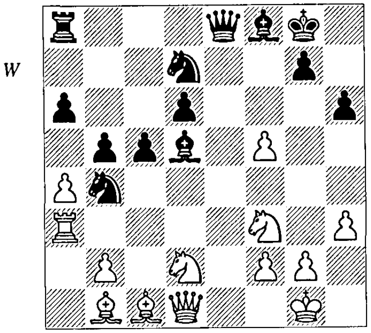
20 ... ♗xd5

This is a logical move, but not the only one. 20...♖xe1+ 21 ♕xe1 ♗xd5 22 ♘e4 ♘f6!? 23 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 24 ♘h2! is an as yet untested alternative, which looks promising for White. However, it's difficult to give a definite verdict about the respective merits of the text-move and 20...♘f6 21 ♘e4 ♗xd5 22 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 23 ♖ae3 (23 ♗d2?! is too committal; after 23...♕xb2 24 ♗xb4 ♗f7! 25 ♖e6 ♕xb4 26 ♖b3 ♕xa4 27 ♗c2 ♖ad8 Black was better in Kasparov-Karpov, New York/Lyons Wch (4) 1990) 23...♗f7 with unclear play.

21 ♖xe8!?

Black had nothing to complain about after 21 ♖ae3 ♖xe3 22 ♖xe3 (22 fxe3!?) 22...♘f6 23 g4 ♕d7 24 g5 hxg5 25 ♘xg5 ♖e8 in M.Mrva-Stajčić, Mitropa Cup (Bükfürdo) 1995. The shadows of K-K appear even here: 21 ♘e4 allows not only the aforementioned 21...♘f6, but also 21...♗f7!? 22 axb5 d5 23 ♘c3 ♖xe1+ 24 ♘xe1 d4 25 ♘a2 ♘xa2 26 ♗xa2 c4! 27 ♖xa6 ♘c5 28 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 29 ♗b1 d3 30 ♗e3 ♕a5 and in Kasparov-Karpov, New York/Lyons Wch (22) 1990, White had to fight for equality.

21 ... ♕xe8 *(D)*



22 ♖e3

A logical novelty. 22 ♘h4 ♘f6 23 ♘g6 ♘c6 24 ♘f4 ♗f7 didn't offer White anything tangible in Arakhamia-Veröci, Cetinje wom 1991.

22 ... ♕f7

Black's queen naturally wants to stay on the kingside and free e8 for the rook. After 22...♕h5 23 ♘e4 it would be vulnerable to possible attacks such as g4 or ♘g3.

23 ♘e4 bxa4!? *(D)*

An interesting move, which surprised Shirov. The alternatives are:

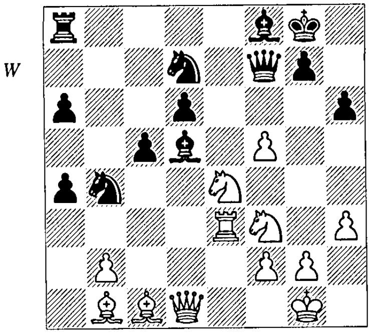
1) 23...♖e8? is tactically unsound due to 24 ♘fg5! (24 ♘eg5 ♗xf3! is less clear) 24...♕xf5 (24...hxg5? loses immediately to 25 ♘xg5) 25 g4! (25 ♘c3 ♕xg5 26 ♘xd5 ♖xe3 27 ♘xb4 is less energetic) 25...♕f4 26 ♖e2 ♕e5 27 ♘c3 and Black won't get enough for his queen.

2) 23...♘f6?! 24 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 25 ♗d2 is not too good for Black either, as the threat of ♗xb4 gives White an important tempo to activate his dark-squared bishop.

3) 23...♕xf5 is more complicated. After 24 ♗d2! (rather than 24 ♘c3 ♕f7 25 ♘xd5, when 25...♘xd5? loses to 26 ♗g6, but 25...♕xd5 is unclear) 24...♗a2! (necessary; 24...♕f7? loses to 25 ♗xb4 cxb4 26 ♘fg5!) 25 ♗xa2+ (25 ♗xb4 ♗xb1 26 g4 ♕xe4! might be even better for Black and 25 g4 ♕d5! 26 ♘c3 ♗b3 27 ♘xd5 ♗xd1 28 ♘xb4 cxb4 29 ♗e4 gives White only a very slim edge at most) 25...♘xa2 26 ♗a5 bxa4 (26...d5? 27 g4 ♕f7 28 ♘eg5! wins for White) 27 ♘xd6 (27 ♕xa4?! is unconvincing due to 27...♘b4) 27...♗xd6 28 ♕xd6 White will soon regain the pawn with an advantage.

4) 23...♗xe4 24 ♖xe4 ♘f6 (after 24...♕xf5?! 25 ♗xh6! Black's kingside is too shaky) 25 ♖e6 ♖e8 26 axb5 ♖xe6 27 fxe6 ♕xe6 28 bxa6 is slightly better for White, due to his unopposed light-squared bishop.

5) 23...♗a2 is Leko's suggestion; after 24 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 25 ♗xa2 ♘xa2 26 ♕xd6 ♘xc1 27 ♖e7 ♕xf5 28 ♖xd7 White is somewhat better due to his more secure king.



24 ♘fg5!?

Black was intending to consolidate by ...♗b3, so White decides to act. 24 ♘eg5? is weak because of 24...♗b3! 25 ♕e2 hxg5 26 ♘xg5 ♕c4. More sober is 24 ♕xa4, when after 24...♘b6!? (24...♘f6 25 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 26 ♘h2 is unpleasant for Black; 24...♖e8 25 ♗d2! prepares ♘eg5 and practically forces 25...♗xe4 26 ♖xe4!?, when the active bishop-pair gives White an edge) 25 ♕d1 ♕xf5 26 ♘c3 (26 ♗d2? ♘c4 is bad for White and 26 ♘h4 is unconvincing due to 26...♕f7 27 ♖g3 ♖e8) 26...♕f7 27 ♘h4!? White has some initiative, but nothing decisive. As we'll see later, taking the f5-pawn has to be considered very carefully, as opening the b1-h7 diagonal makes life difficult for the black king.

24 ... hxg5

Seemingly forced, but nevertheless White also had to consider other moves:

1) The provocative 24...♕xf5?! is interesting:

1a) 25 g4 ♕g6! (25...♕e5?! 26 ♘xc5 ♕xg5 27 ♘xd7 favours White) 26 ♗d2 ♘b6 is at least unclear, as White has closed the important g-file for his rook.

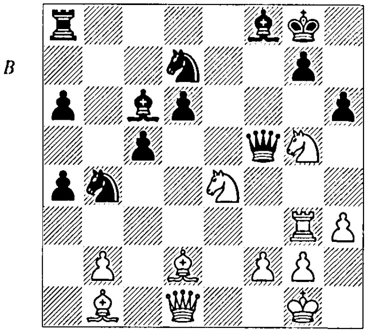
1b) 25 ♘h7!? is speculative: 25...♕f7! (not 25...♕xh7? 26 ♘c3 g6 27 ♘xd5, which is unpalatable for Black) 26 ♖g3 ♔h8.

1c) Much stronger is 25 ♗d2!, with numerous threats:

1c1) 25...♗b3? 26 ♖xb3 axb3 27 ♘xd6 wins the black queen.

1c2) 25...hxg5? 26 ♗xb4 cxb4 (26...♗b3 27 ♖xb3 axb3 28 ♘xc5 wins for White) 27 ♘f6+! ♕xf6 28 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 29 ♕xa8 is hopeless for Black, as 29...♕xb2 30 ♗f5 costs him another piece.

1c3) Even 25...♗c6 (best) 26 ♖g3! *(D)* (26 ♘h7!? is also strong) is perilous for Black, since the concentration of White's attacking forces is overwhelming:



1c31) 26...hxg5 27 ♘xg5 ♕d5 (27...♕f6 28 ♕h5 ♕h6 29 ♗h7+) loses by force to 28 ♕h5 ♘f6 29 ♗h7+ ♔h8 30 ♕h4, when the assault breaks through.

1c32) 26...♘e5 27 ♘xc5 ♕c8 28 ♗xb4 dxc5 29 ♗c3 also gives White a raging attack.

1c33) 26...♕e5 27 ♗c3 ♕c7 (after 27...♕d5 28 ♕h5 the threat ♕g6 decides) 28 ♘h7!? ♘d5 (28...♗xe4 29 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 30 ♘xf8 ♖a7 31 ♖xg7+ ♔xf8 32 ♕xd6+ ♔e8 33 f3 ♕e3+ 34 ♔h2 gives White a mating attack; not much better is 28...♔xh7 29 ♘xd6+ ♔h8 30 ♘f5) 29 ♘xf8 ♘xc3 30 ♘g6! ♕xe4 31 bxc3 ♕e6 32 ♖e3 ♘e5 33 f4 and Black loses a piece.

1c34) The most resilient is 26...♕d5 27 ♘h7!, and now:

1c341) 27...♗e7 28 ♕g4 g5 29 ♕h5 and Black's kingside falls apart.

1c342) 27...♔h8 28 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 29 ♕g4 ♖g8 (29...♕f7 30 ♘xd6 ♕xf2+ 31 ♔h2 is simpler) 30 ♕h4 ♕e6 31 ♘xc5! ♕f6 (31...dxc5 32 ♖g6) 32 ♗g5! ♕xb2 33 ♗f5 and there is no defence against ♗xh6.

1c343) 27...♕d4 28 ♕g4 ♕xb2 (28...♗xe4 29 ♗xe4 and the combination of threats ♘xf8 and ♗c3 breaks Black's resistance; for example, 29...♕xd2 30 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 31 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 32 ♕g8+ ♘f8 33 ♖f3!) 29 ♔h2!?. This is maybe not the only continuation, but is surely the most impressive. Black's pieces are just too far from his king: 29...♔xh7 (29...♕xb1 30 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 31 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 32 ♕g8+ ♘f8 33 ♘f6+ ♔d8 34 ♖g7! mates) 30 ♘g5+ ♔h8 31 ♘f7+ ♔g8 32 ♘xh6+ ♔h8 33 ♗c3 ♘e5 34 ♗xe5 dxe5 35 ♗g6! and to prevent ♘f7+ and ♕h5-h7# Black must give up his queen.

2) 24...♗b3 25 ♘xf7!? (25 ♕f3 hxg5 26 ♘xg5 transposes to the note to Black's 25th move) 25...♗xd1 26 ♘fxd6 allows White a shift to positional tracks; his better pawn-structure gives him an edge in the endgame.

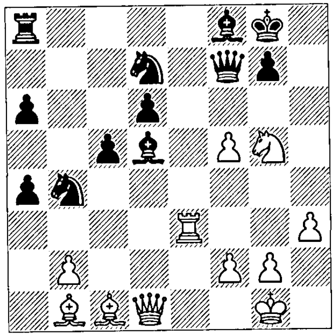
This whole web of variations shows that Leko's move was the right one.

25 ♘xg5 *(D)*

25 ... ♕f6?

However, this grave mistake costs Black the game. Instead, 25...♗b3! 26 ♕f3 (26 ♕g4? ♘f6) 26...♗d5! (26...♕c4? 27 ♖c3 ♕d5 28 ♗e4 is no good for Black, while after 26...♕f6 27 ♖xb3 axb3 28 ♕xa8 White achieves material equality and continues his attack) and now:

1) 27 ♕e2?! ♗c4 (27...♕f6? 28 ♖e6! is the same as in the game) 28 ♕f3 (28 ♕g4? loses to



28...♘f6 29 ♕h4 ♕d5 30 ♖e6 ♕d1+ 31 ♔h2 ♗xe6 32 fxe6 ♕h5) 28...♕f6!? favours Black.

2) 27 ♕d1 ♗b3, with a study-like merry-go-round, makes the draw perfect.

Did Leko overlook 25...♗b3!, or underestimate White's next move?

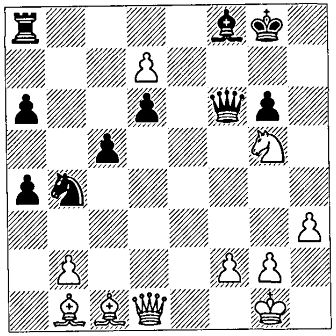
26 ♖e6!

The naïve 26 ♕h5? is premature owing to 26...♕h6, but now Black must take the rook and open the deadly diagonal.

26 ... ♗xe6
27 fxe6 g6

After 27...♘e5 28 ♗h7+ ♔h8 29 ♕h5 ♕h6 30 ♘f7+ ♘xf7 (30...♔xh7 31 ♗xh6 gxh6 32 ♘xe5 dxe5 33 e7 wins for White) 31 ♗xh6 ♘xh6 32 ♗b1 c4 (after 32...g6 the simplest is 33 ♕f3!) 33 g4, with g5 to follow, the defence crumbles.

28 exd7 *(D)*



The smoke has cleared and the results of the tactical operation are catastrophic for Black. Although he is an exchange up, his weak king can't survive the concentrated attack of White's forces.

28 ... ♖d8

An attempt to close the light-square diagonals by 28...d5 fails after 29 ♕g4 d4 30 ♕h4 ♗g7 (30...♕e7 31 ♗xg6 ♕xd7 32 ♗h7+ ♔g7 33 ♕e4 costs Black a rook) 31 ♕h7+ ♔f8 32 ♗xg6 with terminal threats.

29 ♕g4

This move doesn't let Black of the hook, but 29 ♗a2+! ♘xa2 30 ♕d5+ ♔h8 31 ♘f7+ ♔g7 32 ♗h6+! ♔h7 33 ♗g5 would have hastened his demise.

29 ... ♗e7

Black defends against White's main threat, which would have decided after 29...d5 30 ♘h7! ♔xh7 31 ♗g5. 29...♕e7 30 ♘e6 ♖xd7 31 ♕xg6+ ♗g7 32 ♗h6 is also simple, while Black is helpless against a light-square invasion after 29...♗g7 30 ♗d2 (30 h4!?) 30...d5 31 ♗c3 d4 32 ♗xb4 cxb4 33 ♗d3! ♕c6 34 ♘e6 ♖xd7 35 ♕xg6.

30 h4!

30 ♘e6 (30 ♘f3?! ♔f7 31 ♗g5 ♕e6) 30...♔f7 would only prolong the game. After the text-move Black is virtually in zugzwang.

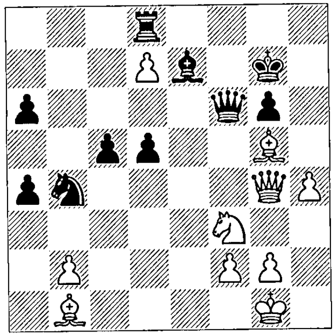
30 ... d5

30...♖f8 31 ♘f3 ♔f7 32 h5 is no better.

31 ♘f3 ♔g7

The g6-pawn is doomed anyway: 31...♔f7 32 ♗xg6+ ♕xg6 33 ♘e5+ or 31...♔h7 32 ♗g5 ♕xb2 33 ♗xg6+.

32 ♗g5 *(D)*



32 ... ♕xb2

Now the end is abrupt. After 32...♕d6 White has more than one way to win; e.g., 33 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 34 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 (34...♔h8 35 ♕h6+ ♔g8 36 ♗h7+! ♕xh7 37 ♕g5+) 35 ♘g5 ♕e1+ 36 ♔h2 ♕e5+ 37 f4! ♕xf4+ 38 ♔h3 ♕e3+ 39 g3 ♖xd7 (39...♔e7 40 ♕g7+ ♔d6 41 ♕f6+) 40 ♕f6+ ♔g8 41 ♗f5.

33 ♗h6+! 1-0

The next move will be 34 ♕xg6 with mate.

Summary

Even the venerable Ruy Lopez has its double-edged lines, which are no less sharp than the most complicated Sicilian. In this game we encounter such a variation, where the source of conflict are two strategically controversial decisions by Black. Firstly by 15...exd4 he gives up the centre (giving up the e5 stronghold in the Ruy Lopez would have been considered heresy some 30 years ago) only to attack White's central pawns by 19...f5!?. The advantages and drawbacks of this committal move have been highlighted above; it's altogether typical for modern opening variations to force an explosive clash of different positional values as soon as possible.

Nevertheless, the whole line is very risky, especially for Black, and even its foremost exponent Karpov has shied away from it lately. Our game also shows that the margin for error is very thin. As the players consistently pursued their respective strategic goals, a single tactical mistake spelt disaster for Leko; after 26 ♖e6! Shirov's attack became irresistible. All achievements on the queenside and in the centre pale into insignificance when the king is in danger (see also Game 12). And here White's forces were all aimed in the right direction; especially impressive were the long-range pieces on the back rank after 28 exd7. The final phase of the game, and even more the lines after the alternative 24...♕xf5?!, show that once the defence has been cracked, it's usually enough to pile up the pieces against the weakened kingside and a combinational solution comes naturally.

Game 16
Vasily Ivanchuk – Veselin Topalov
Wijk aan Zee 1996
English Opening [A26]

1 g3

Ivanchuk is known for his encyclopaedic theoretical knowledge and such an 'irregular' move therefore requires some comment. In the past year he'd lost twice with White against Topalov (a Benoni and a Dragon Sicilian) and this time he was probably in no mood for a theoretical duel in a sharp topical line.

1 ... e5
2 c4 ♘c6
3 ♗g2 g6
4 ♘c3 ♗g7
5 ♘f3

The players have reached a typical English Opening position; which is similar, with colours reversed, to the Closed Sicilian. There Black usually develops his knight to e7, not impeding the possible advance of the f-pawn. With an extra tempo White's choice is wider; the choice at this point is a matter of taste, with alternatives including 5 e3, 5 e4, 5 ♖b1, etc.

5 ... f5

Topalov typically chooses the most aggressive set-up.

6 0-0 d6
7 ♖b1 a5

Black often inserts this move automatically, but it has its drawbacks. Although initially the open a-file is in Black's hands, later on he usually has to abandon it.

8 a3 ♘f6
9 d3

In the long run White can't do without this move anyway; now at least he doesn't have to take the ...e4 advance into account any more.

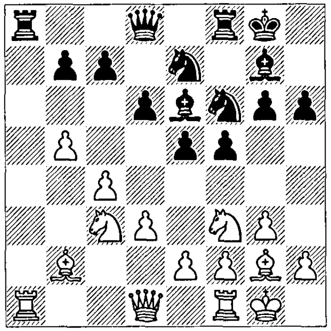
9 ... 0-0
10 b4 axb4
11 axb4 h6
12 b5 ♘e7
13 ♗b2

This natural move is by far the most popular. The immediate action 13 c5 ♗e6 14 b6?! is premature and backfired badly on White after 14...c6! (14...dxc5?! 15 bxc7 ♕xc7 16 ♘b5 ♕b8 17 ♘xe5! is the point of White's operation; Black can't take the knight as his queen gets trapped in the middle of the board) 15 ♘a4 e4! 16 dxe4 ♘xe4 17 cxd6 ♘d5 18 ♘d4 ♗f7 19 ♗b2 ♕xd6, with full central control for Black, in Szuhanek-S.Marinković, Belgrade 1995. Ivanchuk himself had earlier tried 13 ♕b3!? ♗e6 14 ♘d2, when after 14...♖b8 15 ♖a1 g5 16 ♖a7 b6 17 ♗b2 ♖c8 18 ♖fa1 ♕e8 19 ♗b7! White had a noticeable advantage in Ivanchuk-Nunn, Monte Carlo rpd 1994. However, firstly this was only a rapidplay game and secondly Black's play can certainly be improved upon; e.g., 14...♕c8!? 15 ♗a3 f4 with ideas like ...♗h3 or ...♘f5-d4, exposing White's queen on b3.

13 ... ♗e6

Black's reply is no less logical. Straightforward kingside expansion with 13...g5 14 ♖a1 ♖xa1 (14...♖b8 15 c5! is much more effective than the same idea in the note to White's 13th move, and causes Black problems) 15 ♕xa1 f4 16 ♘d2 fxg3 17 hxg3 (after 17 fxg3?! ♘f5 Black's access to the weak e3-square gave him the initiative in Hausrath-Golubev, Münster 1994) 17...♘g4 18 ♘ce4 ♕e8 19 ♖e1 (19 ♗f3!?) 19...♕h5 20 ♘f1 leaves Black very vulnerable on the opposite flank; he misses his defensive rook.

14 ♖a1 *(D)*



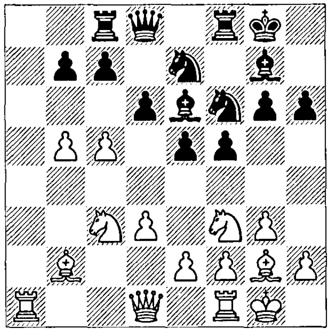
After a series of natural moves both sides have ended their development and now start to pursue their respective strategic goals. Those are indicated by the pawn-structure: White's arena of activity is the queenside, while Black will advance his kingside pawns and play against White's king. If a suitable opportunity arises, he can also become active in the centre (...c6, ...d5, ...e4).

14 ... ♖c8

The most common move, which has been known since the 1968 Spassky-Geller Candidates match (though there the colours were reversed and owing to the extra tempo White's pawn was on b3). The weakest alternative is 14...♖xa1?! 15 ♕xa1 ♘d7 16 ♘d2 ♘c5 17 ♘a4 ♘xa4 18 ♕xa4 b6 19 ♖a1 g5 20 ♕a7 with the idea ♕b7 and ♖a7, Hickl-Rašik, Debrecen Echt 1992. The c7-pawn is acutely weak, and with a pair of rooks exchanged, Black's attacking chances are non-existent. If Black doesn't want to concede the a-file, he can contemplate 14...♕d7. 14...♖b8 has also been tried, but this seems less logical than the text-move. As White can later force ...b6 anyway (with ♖a7 and ♘e1), it's better to protect the c-pawn immediately.

15 c5?! *(D)*

As we have seen above, the idea of opening the queenside with this thrust is not new, but in this particular position it's rather artificial. The usual continuations aim to retain the e2-d3-c4-b5 pawn-chain: 15 ♖a7 b6 16 ♕b3 (also possible is 16 ♘e1 g5 17 ♘c2 f4 18 ♘b4 ♕e8 19 e3!?; White can defend his kingside even after he transfers his knight to the other flank) 16...g5 17 ♘d2 f4 18 ♖fa1. White has chances to get an advantage, although the position remains very double-edged.



15 ... ♘d7!

A commendable reaction. Black can't completely ignore White's advance, since after, for example, 15...♕d7?! 16 ♖a7 (16 b6 is premature, since after 16...cxb6 17 cxd6 ♕xd6 neither 18 ♘b5?! ♕b4 nor 18 ♗a3 ♕d8 19 ♘b5 ♘fd5 is effective for White) 16...♖b8 17 ♕a4 White threatens ♖xb7 and has a clear-cut initiative. Therefore Black aims to relieve the tension without any positional concessions such as 15...b6?! 16 cxb6 cxb6 17 ♖a7.

16 cxd6 cxd6

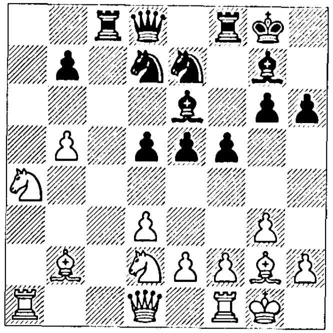
17 ♘a4

In the distant future this knight will be a source of serious trouble for White, but Ivanchuk's move is natural enough. 17 ♘d2 d5 may transpose to the game after 18 ♘a4.

17 ... d5

17...♘c5 18 ♘d2! d5 (18...♘xa4 19 ♕xa4 d5 20 ♖fc1 is similar) 19 ♗a3 is somewhat weaker and gives White more chances to fight for an advantage.

18 ♘d2 *(D)*



An interesting situation. Black has occupied the centre and has more space, while White's pieces are passive. However, Black's central pawns can't advance advantageously and are under pressure from White's fianchettoed bishops, and a timely e4 or f4 thrust might scatter the proud trio.

18 ... ♕e8

Eyeing the b5-pawn. Topalov had other moves, such as 18...♔h7 or the immediate 18...g5, but even the most consistent continuation, 18...f4!? 19 ♕b3!? (19 e3 is weaker since after 19...fxe3 20 fxe3 ♘f5 both 21 ♕e2 ♕g5 and 21 ♖f3 ♕g5 22 h4 ♕g4 23 e4!? ♘xg3 24 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 25 ♕xg4 ♗xg4 26 exd5 ♘e2+ 27 ♔h2 ♘f4 give Black the initiative), reminds Black his centre can become vulnerable.

19 e3 g5

After 19...♘c5?! Black must reckon with 20 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 21 ♗xe5!? ♗xe5 22 d4 ♗xd4 23 exd4 ♖xb5 24 ♕e2, when White has indisputable compensation for the pawn because of Black's weakened kingside and lacking piece coordination.

20 ♕e2

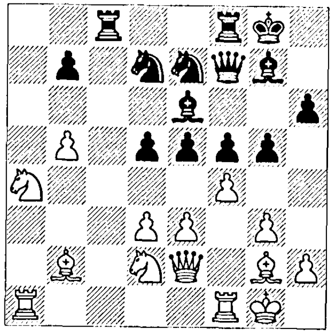
The immediate 20 f4!? also deserves attention.

20 ... ♕f7?!

A slight inaccuracy, since here the queen is potentially exposed and moreover loses contact with the b5-pawn. White doesn't have to worry about 20...♘b8?! 21 f4. Black understandably refrains from 20...f4 21 exf4 gxf4 because of the potential weakness on e5, but the position remains very unclear after 22 ♖fc1 ♕g6. A possible improvement is 20...♘g6, when 21 f4?! ♖c2! 22 fxe5 ♘dxe5 (22...♘gxe5?! is weaker in view of 23 ♖fc1) 23 ♕d1 ♖xb2 24 ♘xb2 ♘g4 gives Black a strong attack for the exchange, but 21 ♖fc1 is more circumspect.

21 f4! *(D)*

After this pawn-break the two sides' forces finally come into direct contact. On the other hand 21 e4?! fxe4 22 dxe4 d4 would 'kill' both White's bishops.



21 ... ♘g6

21...e4?! 22 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 23 ♘b3 or 21...gxf4 22 exf4 (22 gxf4!?) 22...e4 23 ♘b3 would seriously compromise Black's position. Once Black loses control over the dark squares, White's knight will be dominantly placed on d4, especially in comparison with the poor e6-bishop. 21...♖c2 is also ineffective at this point due to 22 fxe5 ♘xe5 23 ♖fc1.

22 fxe5 ♘dxe5

22...♘gxe5? is substantially weaker in view of 23 ♘b3. After the text-move, White must beware of the ...f4 advance.

23 ♘f3

23 ♘b3?! f4 24 ♘d4 ♗g4 could prove dangerous for White, so instead he exchanges a few of the opponent's active minor pieces and starts playing on the dark squares. However, Black's counterplay still shouldn't be underestimated.

23 ... ♘xf3+

24 ♗xf3

Logical, but 24 ♖xf3 f4 25 ♖ff1 is liable to lead to the same position (i.e. 25...♗xb2 26 ♕xb2 transposes to the game).

24 ... ♗xb2

25 ♕xb2 f4!

The faint-hearted 25...♕g7 is insufficient for equality since after 26 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 27 d4! the knight comes to c5 with great effect. Topalov correctly seeks activity.

26 ♗g2

White must be careful; the threat was ...g4 and ...f3. Ivanchuk's move seems best:

1) Just as later on, 26 ♘b6?! only exposes the knight: 26...♖cd8 27 ♗h5 ♗h3 followed by ...♕e6.

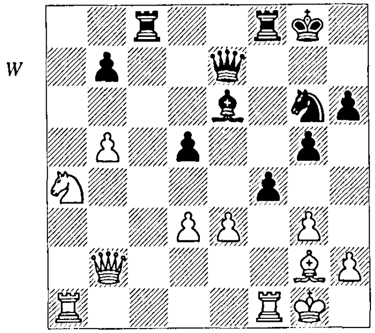
2) The pseudo-active 26 ♗h5 weakens the kingside defences and gives Black a choice:

2a) 26...♕g7 27 exf4 gxf4 28 ♖ae1 (28 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 29 ♗xg6 ♔xg6 30 gxf4 ♗f5 gives Black more than sufficient compensation) 28...♗h3 29 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 30 ♖f3 ♖c2! (with the idea 31 g4 ♖g2+ 32 ♔h1 ♖a2) is not especially dangerous and poses White relatively few problems.

2b) More ambitious and better is 26...♗h3! 27 ♖f3 ♕e6, highlighting the main drawback of White's 26th move. After, for example, 28 gxf4 gxf4 29 exf4 ♖xf4 30 ♖g3 ♖cf8! 31 ♔h1 ♖f1+ 32 ♖g1 ♕e3! Black is much better.

3) 26 exf4 gxf4 27 ♕d4 (27 ♗h5 ♕f5 gets White nowhere) 27...fxg3 28 ♗xd5 (28 hxg3 is worse, since after 28...♕c7 29 ♗xd5 ♕xg3+ 30 ♔h1 ♕h3+ 31 ♔g1 ♖xf1+ 32 ♖xf1 ♘f4! 33 ♗xe6+ ♘xe6 White's king is less secure) 28...gxh2+ 29 ♔xh2 ♕c7+ is roughly equal.

26 ... ♕e7 *(D)*



27 ♘b6?

A giant step in the wrong direction. White should have fought for a better square for his offside knight with 27 exf4 gxf4 28 d4! ♕d6 29 ♕a3. Although a draw would be the most probable result, White certainly wouldn't be the side fighting for it.

27 ... ♖cd8

28 ♕d4 ♕d6

29 exf4

29 gxf4 gxf4 30 ♖a7 ♖f7 is hardly any better, since the black knight's access to h4 can cause White serious problems.

29 ... gxf4

After a series of forced moves White faces a tough problem – his knight is misplaced and requires protection, and the g3-pawn is under attack as well.

30 ♖ae1 ♔h7!

30...fxg3 31 ♖xf8+ (31 hxg3 ♖xf1+ 32 ♖xf1 ♕xg3 33 ♕f6 ♖e8 34 ♖f3 ♕g4 35 ♔f2! is similar) 31...♘xf8 (31...♖xf8? loses to 32 ♖xe6) 32 hxg3 ♕xg3 33 ♖e3 would most probably lead to a draw. Topalov already has greater ambitions and patiently improves his position.

31 ♔h1 ♗g8

31...fxg3 32 hxg3 ♖xf1+ 33 ♗xf1 is only equal.

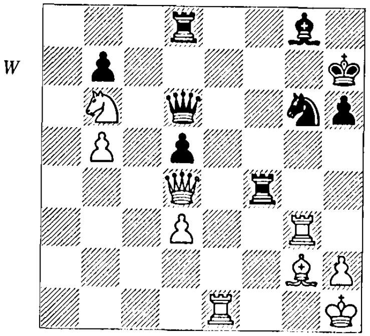
32 ♖f3 fxg3

Black acts, as 32...♖f6?! 33 ♘a4 ♖df8 34 ♖ef1 enables the knight to escape.

33 ♖xg3 ♖f4 *(D)*

34 ♕e3?

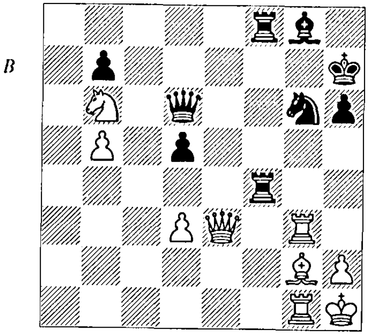
White wants the g1-square to remain free for his rook and relies on tactics to keep the knight alive. However, this should have cost him dearly. 34 ♕g1 was the only move, though 34...♘h4!? (34...♖b4? 35 ♗h3 with ideas like ♗f5 or ♘c8 turns the tables) keeps a clear advantage; e.g., 35 ♖f1 ♘xg2 36 ♕xg2 ♖xf1+ 37 ♕xf1 ♖f8 38 ♕a1 d4 39 ♘c4 ♕d5+ 40 ♔g1 ♕xb5 and although White has rescued his knight, his situation is still critical.



34 ... ♖df8?

Topalov misses his chance. He could have won by 34...d4 35 ♕d2 ♖h4! (35...♕xb6? 36 ♖xg6 was White's idea), when both knight and rook are *en prise*. After 36 ♕f2 ♖f8 37 ♘c8 (37 ♗f3 ♕xb6 38 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 39 ♖e7+ ♔h8 and White stays a piece down) 37...♖xc8 (37...♕b8 38 ♖e7+ ♔h8 39 ♗f3 ♗d5!? also wins) 38 ♗e4 ♖xe4 39 dxe4 ♕e5 the rest is a matter of technique.

35 ♖g1 *(D)*



35 ... d4?!

This frees e4 for White's bishop and starts to tip the scales in Ivanchuk's favour. However, Black has already missed the optimum moment:

1) 35...♘h4? 36 ♗e4+! ♔h8 (36...dxe4 37 ♖g7+ ♔h8 38 ♕g3 mates) 37 ♕d4+ ♕f6 38 ♕xf6+ (38 ♕c5!?) and ♘d7 wins an exchange.

2) After the solid 35...♗f7 White must solve his problems radically by 36 ♘xd5! ♗xd5 37 ♖xg6! ♕xg6 38 ♗xd5, when a draw is the most likely result, because 38...♖f1? allows 39 ♗e4 or 39 ♕e7+ ♖8f7 40 ♕xf7+, regaining the exchange.

3) 35...♖4f6 36 ♘a4 ♕b4 37 ♕c5 (37 ♘c5!? ♕xb5 38 ♗h3 gives White play for the pawn) 37...♕xa4 38 ♖xg6 ♖xg6 39 ♕xf8 ♕d4 (Black can't afford the greedy 39...♕xb5? 40 ♕e7+ ♔h8 41 ♕e5+ ♔h7 42 ♗e4!) is about equal.

4) 35...♖8f6 36 ♘d7! ♕xd7 37 ♖xg6 ♖xg6 38 ♕xf4 is similar to line '3'.

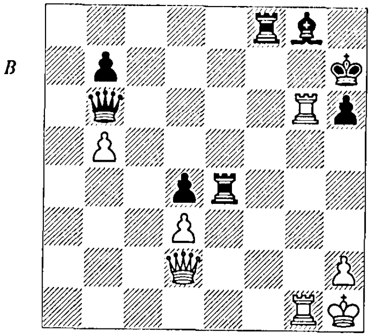
36 ♕d2 ♘e5?

This third mistake in a row in time-trouble throws the game away.

1) The tactical prank 36...♖f2? 37 ♕e1 ♖8f5 (37...♕xb6 also loses, to 38 ♖xg6! and now 38...♔xg6 39 ♕e5! or 38...♕xg6 39 ♗e4) 38 ♗e4 ♕xg3 costs Black a piece after 39 ♖xg3 ♖f1+ 40 ♕xf1 ♖xf1+ 41 ♔g2 ♖f6 42 ♘d7.

2) 36...♗f7 is somewhat better, but even here after 37 ♘c4 ♗xc4 38 dxc4 the long-range bishop and the pressure on the g-file should decide the game in White's favour.

3) Black could have still saved the day with 36...♕xb6 37 ♗e4 ♖xe4 (37...♗f7? 38 ♕xf4) 38 ♖xg6 *(D)*.



Then after 38...♕xg6! (the weaker 38...♖ef4 39 ♕g2! ♗d5 40 ♖g7+ ♔h8 41 ♕xd5 is hopeless for Black) 39 ♖xg6 ♖e3 (39...♔xg6 is insufficient, since after 40 dxe4 ♖d8 41 ♕f4 d3 42 ♕c7 Black will lose his passed pawn) 40 ♖g3 (40 ♖d6 ♗e6! threatens ...♖f1+ with mate and forces a draw after 41 ♕xe3 dxe3 42 ♖xe6 ♖f1+ 43 ♔g2 ♖b1) 40...♖f1+ 41 ♔g2 ♖ee1 White can't improve his position, since 42 ♕c2 ♗d5+ gives Black an immediate perpetual.

37 ♗e4+

This is good enough, but prettier and stronger was 37 ♕xf4! ♖xf4 38 ♗e4+ ♘g6 (38...♖xe4 39 ♖g7+ mates) 39 ♖xg6, when White remains at least a piece up.

37 ... ♖xe4

37...♚h8? 38 ♕xf4 is the end at once.

38 dxe4

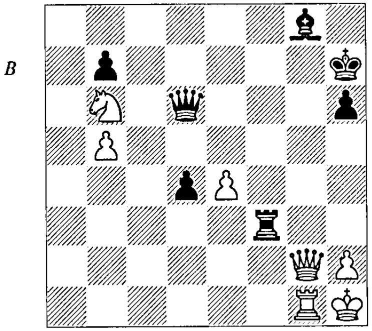
38 ♕g2? allows 38...♖g4, but now attack on the g-file breaks through.

38 ... ♘f3

38...♕xb6 39 ♕g2 ♕e6 40 ♖g7+ ♚h8 41 ♖h7+! mates.

39 ♖xf3! ♖xf3

40 ♕g2 *(D)*



1-0

After the forced 40...♕f8 the long-inactive knight decides the issue: 41 ♕g6+ ♚h8 42 ♘d7 ♕f7 43 ♕xh6+ ♕h7 (43...♗h7 44 ♘e5 ♕f6 45 ♘g6+) 44 ♘f6!.

Summary

White played the opening rather insipidly. In particular, his novelty 15 c5?! can't be recommended, as it gives Black a free hand in the centre. However, one can hardly credit Black with any tangible advantage in the strategically difficult phase between moves 16-21, when the contours of the position started forming without the pieces coming into immediate contact. By conceding the a-file and thus avoiding exchanges of major pieces with 14...♖c8, Black had indicated his intentions to attack on the kingside, but nevertheless later on he spurned the consistent but double-edged advance 18...f4!? or even 20...f4. His hesitation allowed 21 f4!, challenging the broad centre, a typical measure from a Closed Sicilian with a knight on e7. After this counter-thrust White was no longer in danger of a direct attack and the assessment of the position oscillated from unclear to approximately equal.

The next phase of the game started with the misguided 27 ♘b6?. The insecure position of the knight gave Black's kingside play momentum it lacked until then. Topalov rightly disdained immediate material gains (30...♚h7!) and after a further miscalculation by White (34 ♕e3?) could have won immediately. However, here psychology was already playing a major role – elite grandmasters are also only human beings. Our game took place in the last round and Ivanchuk had to defend a half-point lead in a direct encounter against his main rival; this can serve as an explanation of his mistakes. Topalov's downfall can be attributed to similar causes, combined with heavy time-trouble.

Game 17

Alexander Khalifman – Nigel Short

Keres memorial tournament, Pärnu 1996

Queen's Indian Defence [E12]

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 e6
3 ♘f3 b6
4 ♘c3 ♗b7
5 a3 d5
6 cxd5 ♘xd5

7 e3

This is the older approach to the Petrosian Variation, which brought Kasparov many points in the early 1980s. Later, other fashionable alternatives appeared on the scene: 7 ♕c2 (or even 6 ♕c2!?) and 7 ♗d2.

7 ... g6!?

Moves like 7...♘d7, 7...c5 or 7...♗e7 are perhaps no worse, but especially the last one was mercilessly punished by Kasparov. Then came the year 1983 and his match with Korchnoi, who used the then relatively unknown text-move. Kasparov lost this game, the concept withstood the test of time and the champion gradually shifted his attention to the Nimzo-Indian.

8 ♗b5+

The most usual and logical move. Otherwise:

1) After the flank sortie 8 h4 ♗g7 9 h5 Black can afford even the provocative 9...0-0!? (9...c5 10 ♗b5+ ♗c6 11 ♗d3 cxd4!? 12 exd4 ♘xc3 13 bxc3 ♘d7 also seems playable) 10 hxg6 hxg6, when a quick ...c5 gives Black sufficient counterplay.

2) 8 ♘xd5 exd5 9 b4 allows Black to forego the prepared fianchetto and develop his dark-squared bishop to a more active post, thus solving his opening problems after 9...♘d7 10 ♗e2 ♗d6! 11 ♗b2 a6 12 ♘e5 0-0 13 ♖c1 ♖e8, Shirov-Van der Wiel, Wijk aan Zee 1993.

8 ... c6

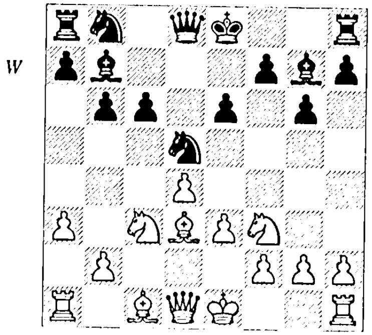
9 ♗d3

A recent example shows Black doesn't have much to worry about after 9 ♗a4: 9...♗g7 10 0-0 (10 e4 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♗a6! is unattractive for White) 10...0-0 11 e4 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 c5 13 ♗g5 (13 ♖e1 cxd4 14 cxd4 ♘c6 15 ♗g5 ♕d6 leads to a typical satisfactory Grünfeld position for Black) 13...f6 14 ♗e3 ♗xe4 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 ♗xc5 ♕xd1 17 ♖fxd1 ♖c8 18 ♗e3 ♗d5 19 ♘d4 f5 20 ♖ab1 ♗xd4 21 ♗xd4 ♘c6 with full equality, Piket-Karpov, Monte Carlo rpd 2000.

9 ♘xd5 exd5 10 ♗d3 ♗g7 11 b4 (11 e4 dxe4 12 ♗xe4 0-0 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 ♗g5 ♕c7 15 ♖c1 ♖fe8 16 ♖e1 c5 led to a quick draw in Kramnik-Anand, Linares 1993) is a slightly better version of note '2' to White's 8th move, but even here after 11...0-0 12 ♗d2 ♕d6 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 a4 a6! 15 a5 b5 Black has a solid position.

9 ... ♗g7 *(D)*

10 ♘a4!?



After the game both players expressed their dissatisfaction with this slightly artificial move, but it certainly isn't the main cause of White's later problems. Khalifman even went on to use the idea later in the same year, so what is the story behind the original 10 ♘a4? We have already mentioned the Grünfeld characteristics of the position; after 10 0-0 (10 e4 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 c5 12 ♗g5 ♕d6! 13 e5 ♕d7 14 dxc5?! 0-0 15 cxb6 axb6 16 0-0 ♕c7 gave Black an excellent position in Kasparov-Korchnoi, London Ct (1) 1983; this is the game that started it all) 10...0-0 (10...♘xc3 11 bxc3 0-0 is not the ideal move-order for Black in view of 12 a4! c5 13 a5, Tkachev-Van der Wiel, Cannes (2) 1999) 11 e4 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 c5 13 ♗g5 ♕d6! Black has the usual pressure against White's pawn-centre just as in the Kasparov-Korchnoi game. Enter Eric Lobron, who wanted to occupy the centre without allowing Black to exchange the knights. The first attempt misfired badly: 10 ♘e2?! c5 11 dxc5 bxc5 12 ♕c2 ♘d7 13 e4 ♘5b6 14 ♘c3 c4 15 ♗e2 ♘c5 16 0-0 ♕c7 17 ♗g5 0-0 18 ♘d2 ♖fc8 19 f4 a5 20 e5 ♗a6 and the initiative was firmly in Black's hands in Lobron-Karpov, Dortmund 1995. On a4 the knight is better placed; it at least prevents the immediate ...c5. Thence the text-move, which also originates from Lobron.

10 ... ♘d7

11 e4

After 11 0-0, 11...0-0 12 e4 ♘e7 simply transposes to the game, but postponing castling with 11...e5!? is also interesting; we'll see some more of this idea below.

11 ... ♘e7

12 0-0

Now 12 ♗f4 allows the surprising 12...c5 13 dxc5 b5! 14 ♘c3 a6 15 ♗d6 ♖c8 and Black regains his pawn advantageously; his pieces are well-coordinated.

12 ... 0-0

12...e5!? also deserves attention. After 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♘c3?! ♕d6 16 ♗c4 ♗xh2+ 17 ♔h1 ♕xd1 18 ♖xd1 ♗e5 19 ♗h6 ♘g8 20 ♗e3 ♘f6 21 ♗d4 ♘g4 22 f4 ♗xd4 23 ♖xd4 ♔e7 Black was a sound pawn up in Lobron-Karpov, Nussloch rpd (2) 1996. Here White unsuccessfully tried to emulate his game with De Boer, which will be discussed later; more sensible was 13 ♗e3 exd4 14 ♗xd4 with approximate equality.

13 ♗g5

13 ♗f4 c5 14 dxc5 ♘xc5 15 ♘xc5 bxc5 was tested in later games, Black has no problems after 16 ♕e2 ♘c6 or 16 ♖c1 c4!.

13 ... h6!?

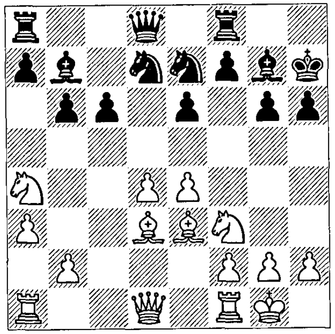
Short is patient. Immediate liberation with 13...e5 14 dxe5 ♘xe5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♘c3 ♕d6?! 17 ♗c4! ♕c5 18 ♕d7 ♖ae8 19 ♕xb7 ♗xc3 20 ♖ac1 ♕xg5 21 ♖xc3 proved to be illusory in Lobron-De Boer, Amsterdam 1995. On the other hand, 13...♖e8 14 ♖c1 ♕b8?! is too passive, as shown by 15 ♗h4! h6 16 b4, Khalifman-Sivokho, St Petersburg Ch 1996. This game was played about two months after Pärnu and we can only guess what improvement White had on his mind after the text-move.

14 ♗e3

14 ♗h4 g5 15 ♗g3 c5 16 dxc5 ♗c6!? (the simple 16...♘xc5 17 ♘xc5 bxc5 also equalizes) 17 cxb6 axb6 18 ♘c3 ♘c5 wins the pawn back with a good position.

14 ... ♔h7 *(D)*

W



An interesting position. White has the centre and Black's forces are limited to their first two ranks. On the other hand, White's piece coordination is not ideal and the black pawns have dynamic potential, with all imaginable freeing advances in the air.

15 ♖c1

A natural move. After 15 ♘c3 or 15 b4 Black doesn't have to be asked twice to play 15...c5!.

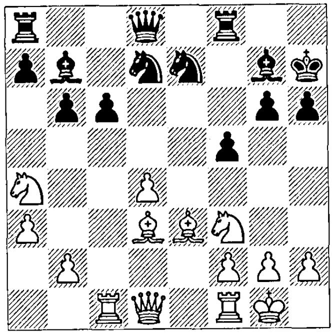
15 ... f5!

16 exf5

This breaks up White's proud centre, but the blockade after 16 ♘c3?! f4 17 ♗d2 e5 is to Black's advantage, as he will occupy the e5 outpost. Also 16 ♕d2 ♘f6 (16...c5 is unconvincing since after 17 exf5 ♘xf5 18 dxc5 ♗xf3 19 gxf3 ♘h4 20 ♗e4 White is slightly better) 17 ♘c3 ♘g4 (17...c5!?) is fine for Black.

16 ... exf5 *(D)*

W



17 ♗f4?!

Only here do things start to go wrong for White. A logical alternative is 17 ♘c3 (17 ♖e1!? is another useful move), and now:

1) 17...c5 18 dxc5 ♗xf3 (18...♘xc5 19 ♗xc5 bxc5 20 ♘a4 favours White) 19 gxf3 ♘xc5 20 ♗c4 is about equal; Black has no good way to avoid further simplification.

2) 17...♘f6!? is more ambitious; Black puts off the central break and improves his pieces first. After 18 b4 (better than 18 ♘e5 ♘fd5 19 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 20 ♘xc6 ♕e8 or 18 ♗f4 ♘h5! 19 ♗e5 ♗xe5 20 dxe5 ♘f4 with ...c5 to follow) 18...♘ed5 (18...♘g4!?) 19 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 20 ♗d2 ♘c7 both sides have chances.

17 ... ♘d5

18 ♗d6?!

Consistent, but the modest 18 ♗d2 is more prudent.

18 ... ♖e8

19 ♘c3 ♕f6

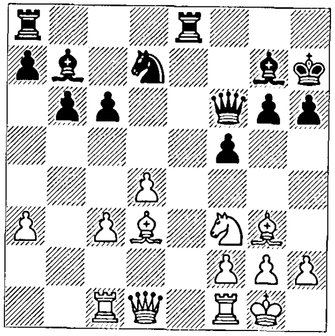
20 ♗g3

White's bishop has got tangled up. After 20 ♘xd5 ♕xd6 followed by ...c5 Black fully activates his bishops. Also 20 ♗e5 ♘xe5 21 dxe5 ♘xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♕e7 is not ideal for White, since the e5-pawn is a liability.

20 ... ♘xc3

21 bxc3 *(D)*

B



21 ... c5?!

Black finally makes this thematic move, but he should have preferred 21...f4!? 22 ♗h4 ♕d6 (22...♕f7?! 23 ♘g5+! hxg5 24 ♕h5+ ♔g8 25 ♗xg6 ♕e6 26 ♗xg5 is dangerous for Black). The ...c5 advance can wait; Black also intends to molest the h4-bishop after moving his king from h7. White would then have more problems than in the game.

22 ♗b5 ♖e7

22...♖ed8?! is worse due to 23 ♗c7.

23 ♘e5

After 23 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 24 ♗e5 ♕c6 25 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 the battery on the long diagonal paralyses White.

However, 23 ♕a4!? is a more interesting alternative:

1) 23...♖d8?! 24 ♗c7 ♖c8 25 ♗f4 enables White to improve the position of his unhappy bishop.

2) 23...♗xf3 24 gxf3 (24 ♗xd7? loses material to 24...♗e2) 24...f4! (24...♘f8?! 25 dxc5 bxc5 26 ♖fd1 gives White's bishops a lot of scope) 25 ♗xd7 fxg3 26 hxg3 cxd4 27 cxd4 ♖d8 is somewhat better for Black, but with the opposite-coloured bishops on the board a draw is the likely result.

3) 23...a6!? 24 ♗xd7 b5 is more enterprising. Now after a queen retreat Black recaptures the bishop, leaving White facing the same problems as after 23 ♗xd7. Therefore White should be generous and play 25 ♗xb5! axb5 26 ♕xb5 ♗xf3! (26...cxd4? is bad in view of 27 ♗e5; 26...♗a6? 27 ♕xc5 ♗xf1 28 ♖xf1 gives White too many pawns for the exchange, as 28...f4? doesn't trap the bishop due to 29 ♗xf4) 27 gxf3 cxd4!? (27...f4 28 ♕xc5 gives White four pawns for the bishop) 28 cxd4 f4 29 ♖c6 ♕f7 (29...♕g5 30 ♖c5 leads to a repetition; 29...♕xd4 30 ♖c4 is also a draw) 30 ♗h4 g5 31 ♗xg5 hxg5 32 ♕xg5 ♖d7. Although here White also has a handful of pawns for the piece, they are all weak and he must fight for equality. On the other hand, Black has only a single pawn left and his king is exposed, so his winning chances are rather slim.

23 ... ♘xe5

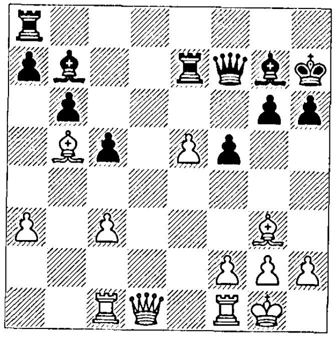
24 dxe5

24 ♗xe5 ♕g5 25 g3 ♗xe5 26 dxe5 f4 27 ♖e1 a6 28 ♗f1 ♖ae8 is dangerous not only for the e5-pawn, but also for White's king.

24 ... ♕f7 *(D)*

24...♕f8 really forces 25 f4, but the queen is then further from the ideal e6-square and it will also take longer to activate the g7-bishop. After 25...a6 26 ♗e2 ♖d8 27 ♕b3 White has enough counterplay.

W



25 f4?!

Even here this is seemingly the only move, but now the positional factors again start to speak for Black. Short rightly points out the much better 25 ♕d6!. Now Black can force a draw with 25...f4 (25...♕d5 26 f3 and 25...♖e6 26 ♗c4 ♖xd6 27 ♗xf7 ♖d2 28 ♗f4 are not without risk for Black, as White's passed pawn can become dangerous) 26 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 27 ♕xe7 ♗xg2. Black's best fighting chance is 25...♗f8!? 26 ♖fd1 f4 27 e6, which also leads to approximate equality.

25 ... a6

26 ♗e2 ♖d7

27 ♕e1

It's not so easy for White to fight for the d-file, since after 27 ♕c2 ♖ad8 (27...♗e4 is ineffective due to 28 ♕b2 b5 29 ♖fd1) 28 ♖fd1 (28 ♗h4? ♖d2 29 ♗xd8 ♖xc2 30 ♖xc2 ♕d5 31 ♗f3 ♕d3 costs White material) 28...♗e4 White has problems; e.g., 29 ♕a4 ♖xd1+ 30 ♖xd1 b5! 31 ♕xa6 ♖xd1+ 32 ♗xd1 ♕a2.

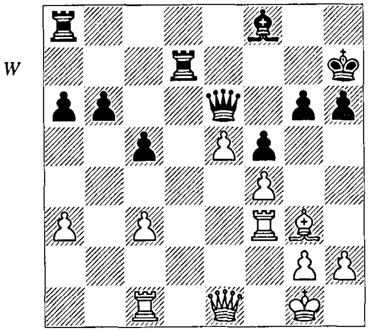
27 ... ♕e6

28 ♗f3

White exchanges his formally 'good' (unobstructed by the central pawn-chain) bishop. Although Black's pressure on the a8-h1 diagonal would sooner or later force this concession, Khalifman could have postponed the swap and played 28 ♗h4!?. This prevents doubling on the central file and also keeps the dark-squared bishop shut out for a while. However, the patient 28...b5 (the overaggressive 28...g5?! 29 fxg5 ♗xe5 31 ♗f3 would seriously weaken Black's king) or even 28...c4!?, followed by ...♗f8, enables Black to retain an edge.

28 ... ♗xf3

29 ♖xf3 ♗f8 *(D)*



30 ♗f2?

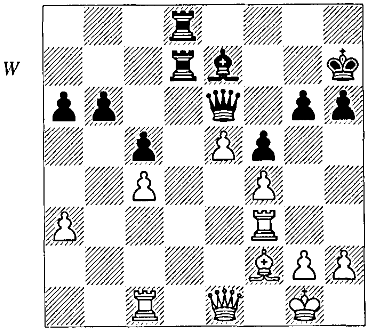
This is too passive, as White now won't get any effective counterplay for the remainder of the game, while Black forcefully increases the pressure. Here was the last chance to play 30 ♗h4!. After 30...c4 (30...b5 31 ♖d1 enables White to contest the d-file) 31 a4 ♗c5+ 32 ♗f2 Black is at best only slightly better; White's counterchances can't be ignored.

30 ... ♗e7

31 c4

It's too late for 31 ♗h4 in view of 31...g5.

31 ... ♖ad8 *(D)*



This is a good example of a strategically won position with equal material. Black firmly controls the only open file and has the better minor piece. White's passed pawn is reliably blockaded and will in fact soon become a serious weakness, while the c4-pawn is already vulnerable. On the other hand, Black's pawns have potential to expand on both flanks. Short's following play has textbook character.

32 ♖fc3

Black's only weak point is b6, but 32 ♖b3 b5!? or 32 a4 ♖d2, threatening to double the rooks on White's second rank, is no big help. White at least prevents this last idea.

32 ... g5

33 ♗e3

33 g3 gxf4 (33...♖g8 is also strong) 34 gxf4 ♖d2 35 ♖3c2 ♖g8+ 36 ♗g3 ♖d4 directly threatens ...♖xf4 and Black has the idea ...h5-h4 up his sleeve as well. Now, however, the e5-pawn will lose its reliable protection.

33 ... gxf4

34 ♗xf4 ♖d4

35 ♕f1

35 g3 ♗g5 is similar.

35 ... ♗g5

36 ♗xg5

This dooms the central pawn. However, Black can force the strategically desirable exchange even after 36 g3 ♖g8!? (36...♗xf4 37 gxf4 ♖e4! is an equivalent alternative), as 37 ♔h1? loses at once to 37...♗xf4 38 gxf4 ♖g4 39 ♖f3 ♕c6.

36 ... hxg5

37 ♕e2 ♔g6

38 ♖e3

There was no other defence against ...♖e4.

38 ... ♖d2

39 ♕f3 g4

40 ♕f1

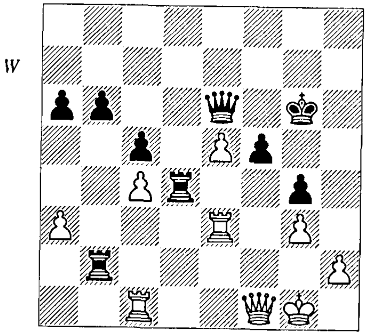
White's queen must stay at home, since after 40 ♕b7 ♖b2 (40...f4?! is premature, since 41 ♕e4+ ♕f5 42 ♖f1! gives White too much play) the a6-pawn is untouchable anyway since 41 ♕xa6? allows 41...♕c6 42 ♖g3 ♖dd2.

40 ... ♖8d4

41 g3

41 h3 f4 42 ♖e2 gxh3 is also lost for White.

41 ... ♖b2 *(D)*



42 ♖e2

This is the only move to prolong the game. 42 ♖d1 ♕xc4 43 ♕xc4 (43 e6? ♕c2) 43...♖xd1+ leads to a rook endgame that is trivially lost for White.

42 ... ♖xe2

43 ♕xe2 ♖e4

44 ♕d2 ♕xe5

45 ♔f2

45 ♖b1 (45 ♕d8 ♖e1+ is the same) 45...♕e6 46 ♕d8 ♖e1+ 47 ♖xe1 ♕xe1+ 48 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 49 ♔f2 (49 ♔f1 ♕xc4+) 49...♕d4+ just shortens the suffering.

45 ... ♖d4

Black's forces are so powerfully centralized that White is unable to avoid the exchange of queens.

46 ♕e2

46 ♕c2 is met by 46...♕d6.

46 ... ♕xe2+

47 ♔xe2

Short has won a pawn and decisively improved his position. Even in the final phase of the game his technique is convincing: a temporary sacrifice forces White's pieces even further into passivity and the last attempts at counterplay against b6 will be ineffective.

47 ... f4

48 gxf4

48 ♖b1 is also insufficient due to 48...f3+! 49 ♔e3 ♖d6, as after 50 ♔f4 ♖f6+ 51 ♔xg4 f2 52 ♖f1 b5 53 cxb5 axb5 54 ♔h3 c4 55 ♔g2 c3 56 g4 c2 White is in zugzwang and will quickly run out of pawn moves.

48 ... ♔f5!

48...♖xf4?! 49 ♖b1 is exactly what Black doesn't want.

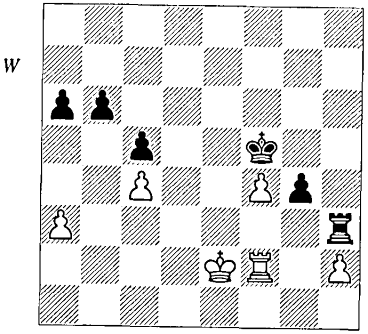
49 ♖b1 ♖d6

50 ♖f1

After 50 a4 ♖h6 51 ♔f1 ♔xf4 the king moves over to the queenside.

50 ... ♖h6

51 ♖f2 ♖h3 *(D)*



52 ♔f1!?

52 a4 ♖a3 is simple enough, so White tries a last trick.

52 ... ♖b3!

52...♖f3? 53 ♖xf3 gxf3 54 a4 leads only to a draw. With the text-move, Black wants to avoid any possible complications after 52...♖xa3 53 ♖b2 and to prepare ...♖xa3 by advancing his a-pawn. All White's pawns are weak and the endgame is lost.

53 ♔g2 a5
54 ♖e2

54 a4 is met by 54...♖b4.

54 ... a4
55 ♖e5+

A desperate fling. 55 ♖f2 loses to 55...♖xa3 56 ♖b2 ♖b3.

55 ... ♔xf4
56 ♖e6 ♖xa3
57 ♖f6+ ♔e5
58 ♖xb6 ♖b3
59 ♖a6 a3
60 ♖a5 ♔f4!

60...♔d4 61 ♖a4 ♔c3 wins as well, but after Black's actual move, the white king will be cut off on the back rank and the a-pawn will promote even faster.

0-1

Summary

The first critical moment in the opening involved the controversial 10 ♘a4!?. White not only values the ideal pawn-centre higher than the invested tempo, but he also wants to keep the b7-bishop passive for as long as possible. We have remarked on the similarity between this line and the Exchange Grünfeld; amazingly enough the same idea appeared at about the same time at an even earlier stage (Nadanian's 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 ♘a4 in 1996). In our game Black reacted well and Khalifman found out that he could only achieve the aforementioned goals temporarily. Determined to uphold his flagging initiative, White ignored the necessity to coordinate his pieces and embarked on a risky sally (17 ♗f4?! and 18 ♗d6?!). As this action was not supported by the remainder of White's forces, the bishop only landed in trouble, which could have been even more clearly highlighted by 21...f4!?. Here marooning the dark-squared bishop on h4 had priority over the immediate 21...c5?!, a break that couldn't be stopped anyway. The danger on the opened b1-h7 diagonal would have been of a purely tactical nature and could have been evaded.

So White managed to save his g3-bishop only to cripple it again shortly afterwards by 25 f4?!. As this is an extremely undesirable move from the positional point of view (it also weakens the a8-h1 diagonal, forcing the strategically disadvantageous ♗f3), White should have ardently looked for alternatives. Even later on Khalifman paid for ignoring the needs of his bishop by spurning 28 ♗h4!? and especially 30 ♗h4!. From move 32 onwards the rest of the game was a real *tour de force* by Short, who relentlessly strengthened his position and up to the very end convincingly dealt with the last bits of counterplay. "Activity is more important than material" is not a universally valid phrase, but patient moves like 48...♔f5! and 52...♖b3! demonstrate it amply.

Game 18

Garry Kasparov – Vishy Anand

VSB tournament, Amsterdam 1996

Caro-Kann Defence, Panov Attack [B14]

1 e4 c6
2 d4 d5
3 exd5 cxd5
4 c4 ♘f6
5 ♘c3 ♘c6

The bad reputation of this move has become a thing of the past and now it gets its share of attention.

6 ♗g5

This aggressive continuation, advocated by Botvinnik in the inter-war years, is White's best chance to fight for an opening advantage. Black doesn't have to worry unduly about the endgame arising after 6 ♘f3 ♗g4 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♕b3 ♗xf3 9 gxf3 e6 10 ♕xb7 ♘xd4 11 ♗b5+ ♘xb5 12 ♕c6+ ♔e7 13 ♕xb5 ♕d7 14 ♘xd5+

♕xd5 15 ♗g5+ f6 16 ♕xd5 exd5 17 ♗e3 ♔e6 since White's split kingside pawns give Black sufficient counterchances. Indicative is also that in the last outing this line had at the elite level (Karpov-Kramnik, Linares 1993), even such an excellent technician as Karpov couldn't achieve anything tangible and after over-pressing he drew only with Black's help.

6 ... e6

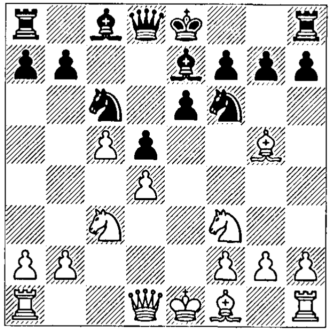
The most solid reaction, although somewhat passive. The old move 6...dxc4 7 d5 ♘e5 8 ♕d4 experienced a brief revival thanks to Seirawan's 8...h6!. Later the fashion wave ended for no apparent reason; after 9 ♗f4 ♘g6 10 ♗xc4 ♘xf4 11 ♕xf4 g5!? 12 ♕d2 ♗g7 Black's strong and unopposed g7-bishop gives him good counterplay. Nowadays a popular double-edged attempt preferred by Leko is 6...♗e6!?. One of the critical possible continuations is 7 a3 ♕d7 8 ♗xf6 gxf6 9 c5 ♗g4 10 f3 ♗f5 11 ♗b5 h5!? 12 ♘ge2 ♗h6 with a sharp and unclear position.

7 ♘f3 ♗e7

Black can reach a typical Queen's Gambit structure with 7...dxc4 8 ♗xc4 ♗e7 9 0-0 0-0. However, he doesn't want to further White's development, and practice confirms the theoretical verdict that Black must then still work hard for full equality.

8 c5 *(D)*

In the early Panov days this ambitious advance was considered the refutation of 5...♘c6 – the position of the knight makes it difficult for Black to undermine White's queenside pawn-chain with ...b6, and the b4-b5 thrust will be more effective. However, practice has gradually shown that Black has other sources of counterplay.



B

8 ... h6?!

The weakening of the kingside this move involves will prove surprisingly serious. Black has two better options:

1) 8...0-0 9 ♗b5 (after 9 ♖c1 ♘e4 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 ♗e2 ♖d8! 12 0-0 e5 Black equalizes easily) 9...♘e4 10 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 11 ♖c1 (11 ♕c2 ♕a5 poses Black no problems) 11...b6! 12 b4 (the pawn ventured too far after 12 c6?! ♕d6 13 0-0 a6 14 ♕a4 ♖b8 15 ♗d3 b5 16 ♕c2 ♘xc3 17 ♕xc3 ♖b6 18 ♘e5 ♕c7 in Christiansen-Khenkin, Biel 1994) 12...bxc5 13 dxc5 ♖b8 14 ♕a4 a6! 15 ♗d3 ♗d7 with promising counterplay for Black.

2) The direct 8...♘e4 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♕d3 ♘b4! 11 ♕b5+ ♘c6 12 ♘xe4 (12 ♗d3 ♘xc3 13 bxc3 0-0 14 0-0 ♕c7 15 c4 dxc4 16 ♗xc4 ♗d7 is about equal) 12...dxe4 13 ♘e5 0-0! 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 15 ♕xc6 ♗b7 16 ♕a4 would have given Black sufficient compensation in Stohl-P.Kiss, Slovakian Cht 1998, if he had played the energetic 16...e3!.

9 ♗f4!

Kasparov retains his valuable bishop. Too soft is 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 ♗b5 0-0. Timman had this position with White against Kramnik in the same event just one day earlier (!); Black was definitely OK after 11 0-0 ♘e7! 12 b4 b6 13 ♕d2 bxc5 14 bxc5 ♗d7 15 ♖ab1 ♖b8.

9 ... ♘e4
10 ♗b5

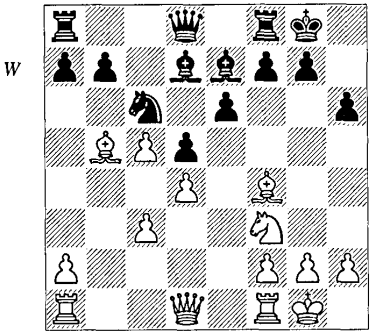
White allows the doubling of his pawns, as 10 ♖c1 costs precious time and after 10...♕a5 11 a3 0-0 the initiative passes to Black.

10 ... ♘xc3

Black hurries with the exchange. After 10...0-0?! 11 ♘xe4! (11 ♗xc6 is less convincing due to 11...♘xc3!? 13 bxc3 bxc6 14 ♘e5 ♕e8) 11...dxe4 12 ♗xc6 bxc6 13 ♘e5 ♕d5 14 ♕a4 his pawns and especially his light-squared bishop create a sorry impression. 10...♕a5?! 11 0-0! ♘xc3 12 ♗xc6+ bxc6 13 bxc3 leaves Black's queen totally misplaced compared to the above line after 10...0-0?! 11 ♗xc6. He can't afford to take the pawn (13...♗a6 14 ♖e1 ♕xc3 15 ♘e5) and with ♘e5 coming anyway he is in big trouble.

11 bxc3 ♗d7
12 0-0 0-0 *(D)*

The players have now left the well-trodden paths. Kasparov has more space and attacking



chances against Black's king, the main danger looming on the weakened b1-h7 diagonal. However, White's pawn-structure is compromised, and especially if Black manages to play the freeing ...b6 unharmed he should be OK. These comments are necessary to understand White's following 'mysterious' move.

13 ♖c1!

After a mechanical continuation such as 13 ♖b1 b6 14 ♗a6 ♗c8 White hardly has anything better than repetition, because the analogous pawn sacrifice 15 ♗d3 obviously lacks punch here. The simplistic 13 ♗d3 b6 14 cxb6 axb6 15 ♗c2 ♖a3 16 ♕d3 f5 is not too good for White either, as the impressive diagonal battery won't decide the game on its own. Kasparov's move also helps White to get a more harmonious version of this idea with the bishop on b1 later on.

13 ... ♖e8

This cost Anand a lot of time. The decentralizing 13...♘a5?! 14 ♗d3 is certainly no solution, as once White's knight comes to e5 it will be very difficult to dislodge it without positional concessions. However, let's investigate the consistent 13...b6. The point of White's previous move was 14 c4! (14 ♕a4 ♕c8 gets White nowhere, since 15 ♗a6? is met by 15...♘xd4!). Some of the following lines were given by Kasparov himself:

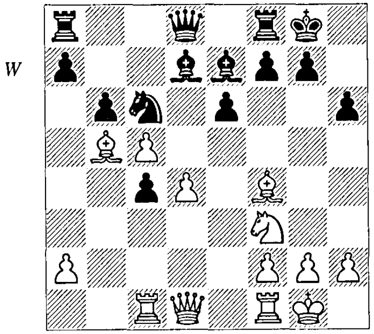
1) 14...bxc5 15 dxc5 (15 cxd5 ♘xd4 16 ♘xd4 cxd4 17 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 18 ♖c7 ♕d8 19 dxe6 fxe6 20 ♕g4 ♔h8 is not too impressive for White, because the passed d-pawn gives Black enough counterplay) and now:

1a) 15...♕a5? 16 ♗d2 ♕xa2 17 ♗c3 threatens to trap the queen; after 17...♕a3 18 cxd5 exd5 19 ♕xd5 ♕xc5 20 ♕xd7 ♕xb5 21 ♘e5 Black loses a piece.

1b) 15...dxc4 and now 16 ♗xc4 leads to line '2b' below, while White also has the alternative 16 ♗d6!?, when his passed pawn and active pieces give him an edge.

1c) 15...a6 16 ♗a4 d4 (after 16...dxc4 17 ♖xc4 White is much better) 17 ♗xc6 (17 ♗d6 ♖c8 with the idea ...♗e8 is less clear) 17...♗xc6 18 ♘xd4 ♖c8 (after 18...♕d7, 19 ♘b3 retains the extra pawn) 19 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 20 ♕g4! enables White to gain a tempo for ♖fd1 and ♗d6, again highlighting the drawbacks of 8...h6?!.

2) 14...dxc4 *(D)* gives White a choice:



2a) 15 d5 (not 15 ♖xc4? ♘a5) is rather speculative. Black has two possibilities:

2a1) The weaker one is 15...exd5 16 ♕xd5 ♕c8 17 ♖fd1 (17 cxb6 axb6 18 ♖xc4 ♗c5 promises White little; Black threatens ...♗e6 and the wild attempt 19 ♗xh6? gxh6 20 ♕h5 ♔g7 21 ♖h4 ♖h8 is insufficient) and then:

2a11) 17...♖d8? and now after 18 cxb6?! axb6 19 ♕e4 ♗a3 20 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 21 ♗xc6 ♕xc6! 22 ♕xc6 ♗xc1 23 g3 ♗xf4 24 gxf4 ♖ac8 25 ♕e4 c3 White can hardly realize his material advantage, but the immediate 18 ♕e4! with double threats ♗xc6 and ♖xd7 puts Black in dire straits.

2a12) 17...a6 18 ♗a4 b5 (18...♖d8? 19 cxb6 ♘b4 20 ♗xd7 ♘xd5 21 ♗xc8 is hopeless for Black) 19 ♕xd7 bxa4 20 ♖xc4 ♕xd7 21 ♖xd7 ♖fd8 22 ♖d2!. White's c5-pawn remains alive and he will soon win Black's a-pawn.

2a13) Thus the ugly 17...♗e8 is forced, although after 18 cxb6 axb6 19 ♗xc4 White is better.

2a2) 15...♘b4! 16 ♗xd7 (16 c6 ♘xd5 17 cxd7 ♘xf4 18 ♖xc4 ♘g6 seems impressive, but the passed pawn can't make the last decisive step and Black has a clear plan to encircle it gradually with ...♗c5, ...♕c7, ...♖ad8, etc.) 16...♕xd7 17 d6 ♗f6 18 ♖xc4 bxc5 19 ♗e5 (after 19 ♖xc5 ♘d5 20 ♗g3 ♖fc8 the d6-pawn is firmly stopped and Black has little to fear) 19...♗d8!? (better than 19...♕b5 20 ♕b3 or 19...♘d5 20 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 21 ♘e5 ♕c8 22 ♕c2) 20 ♖xc5 ♘d5 and again the pawn is cut off from White's main forces.

2b) More testing is 15 ♗xc4!? bxc5 (proposing a reasonable alternative for Black is difficult; we already know the motif 15...♘a5 16 ♗d3 ♗c6 17 ♘e5 with a strong attack) 16 dxc5 ♗xc5 (otherwise White just has strong pressure for free) 17 ♗b5 ♕e7 (17...♕b6? loses a piece to 18 ♕xd7 ♕xb5 19 a4 ♕b6 20 ♗c7) 18 ♕c2 and now:

2b1) 18...♘d4 19 ♕xc5 ♕xc5 20 ♖xc5 ♗xb5 (20...♘xb5? 21 a4 ♘a3 22 ♖a1 traps the knight) 21 ♘xd4 ♗xf1 22 ♔xf1 leads to a very difficult endgame for Black, where White can concentrate his pieces against the a7-pawn, avoiding a rook exchange for the time being.

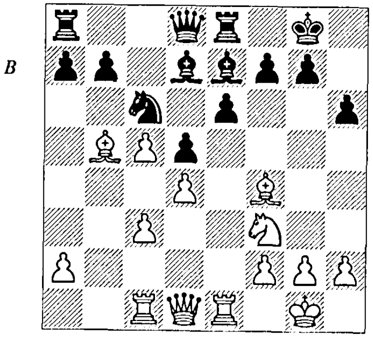
2b2) Better is 18...♗a3!? 19 ♗xc6 ♗xc1 20 ♖xc1 ♖ac8 21 ♘e5 (after 21 ♕e4 ♗xc6 22 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 23 ♕xc6 ♕b4 Black's activity should save the game) 21...♗xc6 22 ♘xc6 ♕d7. Although Black can't directly exploit the pin on the c-file, it certainly limits White's options. The idea is to play, for example, ...♖fe8, ...e5, ...♔h8 and ...♖e6, and it will not be easy for White to retain the a-pawns, a necessary prerequisite for any winning attempts.

So what is the overall conclusion of this analysis? Somehow I feel Anand should have gone for 13...b6, although admittedly it's a difficult decision to abandon all ambitions and invest material just to release the tension as early as move 13.

14 ♖e1 *(D)*

14 ... ♗f6

Here 14...b6?! is unquestionably weaker due to 15 c4!: 15...bxc5 (after 15...dxc4 16 d5 exd5 17 ♕xd5 the f7-pawn is very sensitive) 16 cxd5 ♘xd4 17 ♘xd4 cxd4 18 ♗c7 ♕c8 19 ♗e5 ♕d8 20 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 21 dxe6 ♕xe6 (21...fxe6? loses at once to 22 ♖c7 followed by ♕g4) 22 ♗xg7 with a winning attack.



After the text-move, Black is finally ready to play ...b6.

15 ♖b1!?

Activating the rook, as on c1 it's of no use any more. Anand was more afraid of the simple 15 ♗d3 b6 16 cxb6 axb6 17 ♗b1. After 17...h5 (Black must have regretted more than once that pawns can't go backwards; otherwise he would certainly play ...h6-h7!) 18 ♕d3 (18 ♘e5 is weaker due to 18...♘xe5! 19 dxe5 ♗g5) 18...g6 White has many attacking ideas (h3 and g4, or a timely ♘e5) and is certainly better, but Black is not completely devoid of counterplay (...b5-b4). It's difficult to compare this with Kasparov's choice, which involves a pawn sacrifice and causes Black altogether different problems, mostly of a tactical nature.

15 ... b6
16 ♗a6 ♗c8

16...bxc5 17 ♗b7 doesn't give Black enough for the exchange.

17 ♗b5 ♗d7
18 ♗a6 ♗c8
19 ♗d3 *(D)*

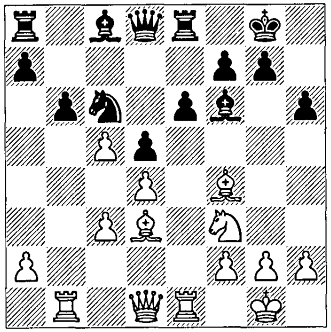
After saving some time on the clock White shows his cards.

19 ... bxc5

This move is natural enough, but the alternative 19...♗d7!? deserves attention. The analogous continuation to the game, 20 ♘e5 ♘xe5 21 dxe5, allows the reply 21...♗g5, a defence Black doesn't have after the text-move. 20 ♗c2 bxc5 21 ♕d3 g6 22 ♗xh6 e5!? 23 dxe5 ♗f5 is approximately equal, and 20 cxb6 axb6 gives Black a better version of the note to White's 15th move.

20 ♘e5!

B



While the a8-rook and c8-bishop are on their original squares, all White's pieces are active and aiming in one direction – Black's king.

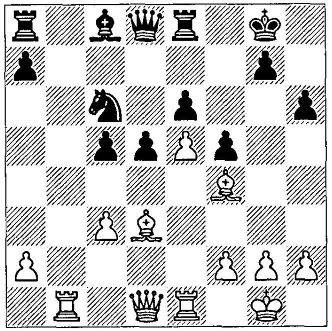
20 ... ♗d7?

Black leaves White's knight alive one move too long. Other moves:

1) 20...♘xe5? is not good either since after 21 dxe5 ♗g5 (21...♗e7 22 ♕h5 ♗f8 23 ♖e3 g6 24 ♖g3 ♗g7 25 ♗xg6 fxg6 26 ♖xg6 wins for White; he will transfer his rook to the g-file via e1) 22 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 (White's attack breaks through after 22...hxg5 23 ♕h5 g6 24 ♗xg6 fxg6 25 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 26 ♖e3) 23 ♗b5 and 24 ♗c6 he loses an exchange.

2) Kasparov points out Black's best defence, 20...♗xe5 21 dxe5 f5! *(D)*.

W



Black uses the opportunity to close the dangerous diagonal, and White must now make a crucial decision:

2a) 22 ♖e3 ♕h4! 23 ♕a4 ♗d7 24 ♖h3 ♕e7 25 ♕d1 ♕f7 enables Black to coordinate his pieces.

2b) More attractive is 22 ♕h5 ♖e7 (22...♕e7 23 ♕g6 ♕f7 24 ♗xf5! ♕xg6 25 ♗xg6 ♖f8 26 ♗c1 gives White a pleasant endgame with an active bishop-pair) 23 ♖e3 ♕e8 24 ♕h4 ♕f8 (the over-optimistic 24...g5? 25 ♖g3 ♕f8 loses nicely to 26 ♗xg5! hxg5 27 ♖xg5+ ♖g7 28 ♖h5 ♔f7 29 ♖h8 ♖g8 30 ♖b7+! ♗xb7 31 ♕f6+ ♔e8 32 ♕xe6+ ♘e7 33 ♗b5+ with mate) 25 ♖g3 ♔h7. Although White has attacking chances, Black's defences remain very solid.

2c) The bishops are more effective in open positions, so the most logical continuation is 22 exf6!? ♕xf6:

2c1) 23 ♕h5 ♗d7 24 ♖b7 ♕xc3 25 ♖d1 ♖ed8 is tricky but speculative and doesn't promise White much; he should prefer positional methods.

2c2) 23 ♗d6 c4 24 ♗c2 ♕xc3!? (24...♖d8 25 ♗c7 ♖f8 26 ♕d2 is similar to 24...c4 in line '2c3' and gives White good compensation), with the idea 25 ♗a4 ♗d7 26 ♖b7 ♖ed8 27 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 28 ♗xc6 ♖xd6 29 ♗xa8, is interesting. The bishop is still alive, but remains isolated and Black's pawns might become dangerous.

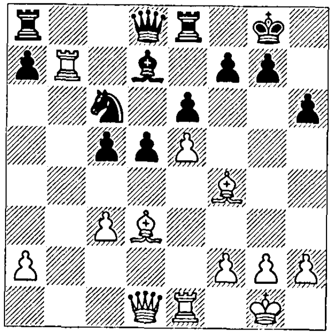
2c3) My favourite is 23 ♗b5 ♗d7 24 ♗d6 ♕xc3 (other moves seem worse; 24...a6 25 ♗a4 only enables the rook to infiltrate via b6; 24...c4 25 ♖e3 gives White a pleasant bind; the strong d6-bishop dominates Black's rooks by controlling b8 and f8 and, if nothing else, White always has the option of ♗xc6 and ♗e5 with a dark-square blockade) 25 ♖c1, when White's initiative is worth the pawn.

21 ♖b7 ♗xe5

Now Black must capture the knight (not 21...♖e7? 22 ♖xd7). The other possibility was 21...♘xe5 22 dxe5 ♗c6 (after 22...♗e7 23 ♕g4 ♔f8 24 ♕h5 the threat of ♗xh6 decides), when White has to invest material, as a rook retreat would allow 23...♗g5. 23 exf6 is unconvincing due to 23...♗xb7 24 fxg7 ♕h4, but much stronger is 23 ♖xf7! ♔xf7 24 exf6 ♕xf6 (24...gxf6? 25 ♕h5+ ♔e7 26 ♖xe6+! ♔xe6 27 ♕f5+ is a mate in two) 25 ♗e5 ♕g5 26 f4 ♕e7 (after 26...♕h4 27 ♖e3 ♖g8 28 ♖g3 ♔e8 29 ♗h7 White wins most of the material back with a continuing attack) 27 ♕h5+ ♔f8 28 ♕g6 (28 ♖e3!? is also possible) 28...♖ad8 29 ♖e3 (29 ♕h7 ♕f7 30 f5 is premature in view of 30...exf5 31 ♗xf5 ♖xe5 32 ♖xe5 ♖d6) with a strong attack. Although proving a win with mathematical exactitude is a different matter, one can hardly blame Anand for spurning this line.

22 dxe5 *(D)*

B



22 ... ♖b8?

Black is understandably uncomfortable with White's rook on the seventh rank, but now he loses practically by force. Other options:

1) 22...♗c8 23 ♕g4! ♖e7 (the only move that doesn't lose immediately; 23...♔f8 24 ♗xh6! gxh6 25 ♖xf7+! ♔xf7 26 ♕g6+ ♔f8 27 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 28 ♗h7+ ♔f7 29 ♗g6+ and 23...♗xb7 24 ♗xh6 g6 25 ♗xg6 ♔h8 26 ♗xf7 ♖g8 27 ♕h5 both fail violently for Black) 24 ♗xh6 ♕f8 25 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 26 ♗g5 and after the rook and the h-pawn join the attack, Black's defence will collapse.

2) After 22...♘e7 23 ♕h5 ♘f5 (23...♗c6 24 ♗xh6! ♗xb7 25 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 26 ♕h7+ ♔f8 27 ♕h6+ ♔g8 28 ♗h7+ leads to mate and 23...♘g6 24 ♗xh6! is not much of an improvement for Black) 24 g4 ♘h4 25 g5 (25 ♖e3!?) 25...♘g6 26 ♗xg6 fxg6 27 ♕xg6 ♖e7 28 gxh6 White is a pawn up with a continuing attack; the most natural move, 28...♗e8, runs into 29 ♕xg7+! ♖xg7 30 ♖xg7+ and 31 ♗g5, winning.

3) This was Black's last chance to gain some breathing space for his king: it was absolutely imperative to play 22...f5! 23 exf6 ♕xf6, although White is clearly better after 24 ♗xh6 ♕xh6 25 ♖xd7.

23 ♖xb8 ♕xb8

23...♘xb8 24 ♕g4 ♔f8 25 ♖e3 would most probably only transpose into the game after 25...♘c6, as 25...g5? 26 ♖h3! gxf4 (26...f5 27 ♕h5) 27 ♖xh6 ♗c6 28 ♖h7! ♔e7 29 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 30 ♕g6+ leads to a mate we have already seen above.

24 ♕g4 ♔f8

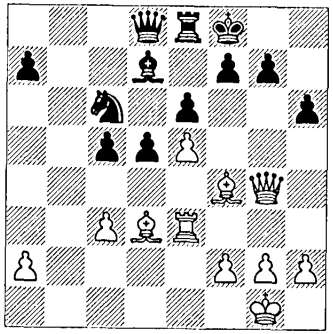
25 ♖e3

Now it's clear that the house is on fire and there are no conventional ways to extinguish it.

25 ... ♕d8 *(D)*

25...g5 26 ♕h5 gxf4 27 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 28 ♕f6+ ♔f8 29 ♖h3 ♘c7 30 ♕h6+ and 25...♘e7 26 ♖g3 ♘g6 27 ♗xg6 fxg6 28 ♕xg6 ♖e7 29 ♕h7 are the simple lines. Somewhat more testing, but also insufficient, is 25...♕b2 26 h4! (26 ♖g3? allows the surprising 26...♕a1+ 27 ♗f1 ♗c8! 28 ♕xg7+ ♔e7, when White has nothing better than an unclear endgame after 29 ♗xh6 ♗a6 30 ♕g5+ ♔d7 31 ♕c1 ♕xc1 32 ♗xc1 ♗xf1 33 ♔xf1 ♘xe5) 26...c4 27 ♖g3 g5 28 hxg5 cxd3 29 gxh6 ♗c8 30 h7 ♔e7 31 ♕h4+ ♔d7 32 ♖g8 and the pawn queens. This is the first of a number of lines in which the h-pawn plays a star role.

W



26 h4!

26 ♖g3? is premature since after 26...g5 27 ♕h5 gxf4 28 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 29 ♕f6+ ♔f8 30 ♕xf4 (30 ♖h3 ♕xf6 31 exf6 ♔g8 is also only a draw) 30...♔e7! (30...♗c8? loses to 31 ♖f3! ♖e7 32 ♖h3) Black's king is ready to escape, so White should give a perpetual; after 31 ♗g6? ♘xe5! 32 ♕xe5 fxg6 Black beats off the attack. Kasparov's multi-purpose move not only prevents ...g5, but also advances the pawn towards its promotion square and safeguards his own king against back-rank surprises. Because of

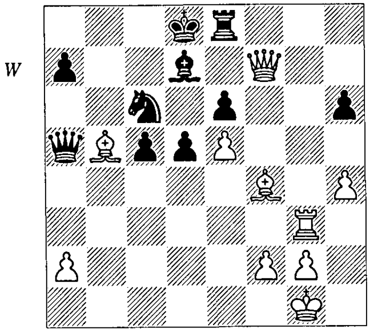
this last consideration, weaker is 26 ♖h3 f5! 27 exf6 ♕xf6, when 28 ♗d6+ ♔g8 29 ♖f3 is met by 29...♘e5, while even after 28 ♖f3 e5! (28...♔g8 loses to 29 ♕h5!; especially nice is 29...e5 30 ♗xh6 ♕xh6 31 ♕f7+ ♔h8 32 ♕f8+!) 29 ♗xh6 ♗xg4 30 ♖xf6+ ♔e7 White will be only a pawn up in an endgame.

26 ... ♕a5

26...f5 27 exf6 ♕xf6 28 ♗d6+ ♔g8 29 ♖f3 ♘e5 30 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 31 ♕g6 would shorten Black's suffering; now the king can at least escape.

27 ♖g3 ♔e7
28 ♕xg7 ♔d8
29 ♕xf7 ♕xc3
30 ♗b5 ♕a5 *(D)*

The queen hurries to help its king. 30...♕e1+ 31 ♔h2 only improves White's position, as after 31...♘e7 32 ♗xd7 ♔xd7 33 ♖g6 the e6-pawn falls.



31 ♖g7?!

An inaccuracy, which however doesn't alter the assessment of the position. Much simpler was 31 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 32 ♗xh6 d4 (32...♕e1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕xe5 34 ♗f4) 33 ♗g5+ ♔c8 34 h5, when the h-pawn is unstoppable.

31 ... ♘e7

This is best. Now White suddenly has to work for the point again, as Black's king is not as exposed as in the previous note. 31...♕c7 32 ♗xh6 is hopeless for Black, as 32...♘xe5 fails to 33 ♗g5+ ♔c8 34 ♕xe8+. White's h-pawn will also be very strong after 31...♖e7 32 ♕f8+ ♔c7 (32...♖e8? 33 ♖xd7+) 33 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 34 ♗f1!? and ♗xh6.

32 ♗xd7 ♔xd7

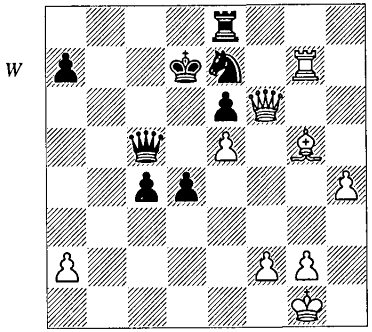
33 ♕f6!

The e5-pawn requires protection. 33 ♗xh6?! ♕e1+ 34 ♔h2 ♕xe5+ 35 ♗f4 ♕f5 makes the outcome unclear.

33 ... d4?!

33...♕e1+? is even worse owing to 34 ♔h2 ♕xf2 35 ♗xh6 followed by 36 ♗g5, but 33...c4!? would have caused White more problems. As this is the more distant pawn, after 34 ♗xh6 c3 35 ♗g5 ♕c5 the simplifying operation doesn't work. Nevertheless even here White's passed pawn is the more dangerous one due to his safe king: 36 h5 c2 (after 36...d4 37 ♕f3 c2 the simplest way to win is 38 ♕f4, when Black's pawns will never get past the dark squares; e.g., 38...♖c8 39 ♕c1 d3 40 h6) 37 h6!? (37 ♕f4 wins as well, but this thematic move demonstrates the strength of White's position) 37...c1♕+ 38 ♗xc1 ♕xc1+ 39 ♔h2 d4 (39...♕c8 40 h7 ♕d8 41 ♕h4 a5 42 ♕a4+ ♔c8 43 ♕a3! leaves Black with no defence against ♕d6) 40 h7 ♕c5 (40...♕c2 loses more quickly: 41 f4! and f5) 41 ♖g3 and White's attack will stop the d-pawn in time; for example, 41...♕d5 42 h8♕ ♖xh8+ 43 ♕xh8 d3 44 ♕b8 d2 45 ♕xa7+ ♔e8 46 ♕b8+ ♔d7 (46...♔f7 47 ♕h8) 47 ♖c3!.

34 ♗xh6 c4
35 ♗g5 ♕c5 *(D)*



Black's pawns are ready to march on, but White has a simple solution at hand.

36 ♖xe7+! 1-0

After 36...♖xe7 37 ♕xe7+ ♕xe7 38 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 39 ♔f1 White's king stops the black duo, whereas his black counterpart is helpless against White's quartet.

Summary

A little move with big consequences – this is a good description of 8...h6?!. We have already mentioned its drawbacks, i.e. that in this type of position b1-h7 is White's main attacking diagonal and with the h6-pawn targeted the natural defence ...g6 becomes impossible. Also a knight on e5 can be at best exchanged, as ...f6 creates a further hole on g6. Kasparov made these the main themes of the game, but clever play was required, as White's fractured pawns gave Black counterchances. A distinctive feature in this sense was 13 ♖c1!, a prophylactic move of the highest calibre. It's not meant as a preparation of c4, but if Black plays the logical 13...b6, it enhances the effect of this advance by supporting the passed c-pawn. Analysis nevertheless shows this was a valid alternative for Black.

A few moves later it was Kasparov facing an important and difficult decision. True to his style, he preferred an enterprising pawn sacrifice, but despite being justifiably proud of his attacking performance, even Kasparov admits that he "rejected the obvious 15 ♗d3 for reasons obscure" to himself. Anand could have declined the gift (19...♗d7!?), but he took the pawn without fully realizing the consequences. It is clear the e5-knight has to be taken sooner or later, but afterwards Black couldn't allow White to have both the b1-h7 diagonal and the e5 outpost, which literally cut his position in two. Thus a timely ...f5 was necessary (20...♗xe5 21 dxe5 f5! or at least 22...f5! as the best fighting chance). In the game White had both of these trumps and to avoid being mated, Black's king had to abandon the kingside, which was completely annihilated.

Game 19

Garry Kasparov – Vladimir Kramnik

Dos Hermanas 1996

Queen's Gambit Declined, Semi-Slav Defence [D48]

1 d4 d5
2 c4 c6
3 ♘c3 ♘f6
4 ♘f3 e6
5 e3

Here Kasparov's usual choice is 5 ♗g5, but in this game he wanted to test a specific idea against the Meran.

5 ... ♘bd7
6 ♗d3 dxc4
7 ♗xc4 b5
8 ♗d3 ♗b7
9 0-0 a6
10 e4 c5
11 d5 c4
12 ♗c2 ♕c7
13 ♘d4 ♘c5

This is the best move. In Game 1 Black played the inferior 13...e5?!; the notes there also go over the opening phase in more detail.

14 b4

A principled continuation. White breaks up one of Black's main positional trumps and opens up the position, intending to make life difficult for the as yet uncastled black king. Weaker is 14 ♗g5 0-0-0 15 ♗xf6 (now 15 b4 fails to break up Black's queenside pawn-chain and can be even downright dangerous for White after 15...♘cd7 16 dxe6?! ♘e5) 15...gxf6 16 b4 cxb3 (16...♘d7!? is also possible) 17 ♗xb3 ♔b8 18 ♖c1 ♗d6 19 ♕h5 ♗f4 and in Chernin-Topalov, Budapest Z 1993, White would have sorely missed his dark-squared bishop even after the best continuation 20 ♖c2 ♕e5. 14 dxe6 fxe6 15 ♗e3! is Lautier's idea, also analysed in Game 1. However, nobody has yet reached the position this way; White has always played 13 dxe6 first.

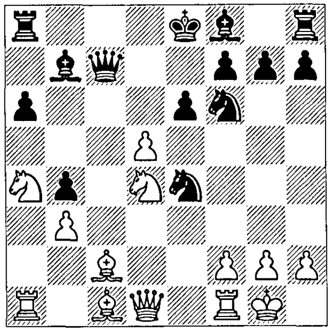
14 ... cxb3
15 axb3 b4

This is substantially better than 15...♗d6? 16 f4 or 15...0-0-0?! 16 b4 ♘cd7 17 ♗d2 (even the immediate 17 ♘cxb5!? is dangerous); in fact, the text-move is practically forced.

16 ♘a4 ♘cxe4 *(D)*

Again the best. It's illogical to exchange the decentralized knight with 16...♘xa4?! 17 ♖xa4 (17 bxa4!? also deserves attention; from a1 the rook can join the attack faster, and 17...e5 18 ♘f5 ♗c8 19 a5! fails to solve Black's problems) 17...exd5 18 e5!? (18 exd5 ♘xd5 19 ♖e1+ ♗e7 20 ♘f5 0-0 21 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 22 ♖xb4 is pleasant for White, but not much more than that) 18...♘e4 19 ♗f4 ♘c3 (19...♗c5 20 ♗xe4 dxe4 21 ♘f5 is also dangerous for Black; e.g., 21...♕c6 22 ♗e3! with the point 22...0-0? 23 ♖a5) 20 ♕f3 ♕b6 21 e6 ♘xa4 (21...♕xd4? 22 ♗e5!) 22 ♖e1!, when it's doubtful that the black king can survive the onslaught.

W



17 ♗xe4!?

This is Kasparov's novelty. 17 dxe6 ♖d8 (17...♗d6!? 18 exf7+ ♔xf7 is also interesting) 18 exf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♗e3 ♗d6 20 h3 ♖he8 21 ♖c1 had been played previously in Yakovich-Sorokin, Calcutta 1991. Now 21...♘c3! 22 ♘xc3 bxc3 leads to an unclear position according to Yakovich.

17 ... ♘xe4
18 dxe6 ♗d6

Confronted with a new idea, Kramnik after some thought reacts logically and tries to castle kingside as soon as possible.

1) Weaker is 18...0-0-0 19 ♕g4 ♘f6 (not 19...♖xd4? losing immediately after 20 e7+, while both 19...♔b8 20 ♗f4 ♗d6 21 ♖ac1 and 19...h5!? 20 ♕h3 ♔b8 21 ♗e3 give White a strong attack) 20 ♕h3 (20 ♕h4!?, with the idea 20...fxe6 21 ♘xe6 ♕c6 22 ♕c4!, is also advantageous for White) 20...♖xd4 21 e7+ ♔b8 22 exf8♕+ ♖xf8 23 ♗e3 ♗c8 and now the surprising tactical blow 24 ♘c5! works out well for White; e.g., 24...♕xc5 25 ♕g3+ ♔a8 26 ♕xg7.

2) Also 18...♖d8, by analogy with the note to White's 17th move, is not an ideal choice, although in this case White has to continue accurately:

2a) 19 exf7+ ♔xf7! (19...♕xf7 is weaker due to 20 f3 ♕f6 21 ♗b2) 20 ♗e3 (20 ♗b2 ♘c3 21 ♗xc3 bxc3 22 ♕g4 ♕c8 is unconvincing for White) 20...♗d6 21 ♕f3+ ♘f6 22 ♕h3 ♗c8 leads to an unclear position.

2b) 19 ♗e3 ♗d6 (19...fxe6? 20 ♘xe6) 20 ♕g4 ♗xh2+ 21 ♔h1 ♗e5 22 ♖ac1 ♘c3 23 ♖fe1!? gives White good compensation.

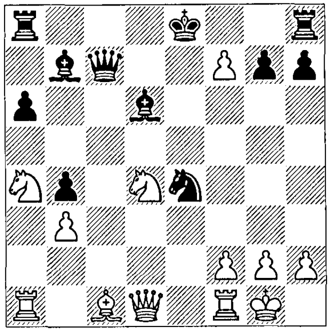
2c) The strongest is, however, 19 ♗b2! ♗d6 (19...♘c3 20 ♗xc3 bxc3 21 ♕g4 h5 22 exf7+ ♕xf7 23 ♖fe1+ ♗e7 24 ♖xe7+! ♕xe7 25 ♕g6+ ♔d7 26 ♘e6! gives White a ferocious attack) 20 ♖c1! (20 ♕g4!?) 20...♗xh2+ 21 ♔h1 ♘c3 (21...♕e5 loses directly to 22 exf7+ ♔xf7 23 ♕f3+ ♔g8 24 ♘c6) 22 ♘xc3 bxc3 23 ♖xc3 ♕e5 24 ♖d3! fxe6 (the point of White's last move was to stop 24...♕g5, which now fails to 25 ♘f3) 25 ♕g4 and Black can't cope with the multiple threats.

All these lines give us a clue why Kasparov played the apparently anti-positional 17 ♗xe4!? – White's queen gains access to g4, from where it can pester Black's king on either side of the board.

19 exf7+ *(D)*

Here Kasparov started thinking too. After 19 ♗b2 Black can afford even the risky-looking 19...♗xh2+!? 20 ♔h1 0-0 21 e7 ♖fe8 22 ♘f5 ♕f4 23 ♕h5 f6, when there is nothing decisive in sight.

B



19 ... ♕xf7!

A brave concept, which involves a piece sacrifice. Kramnik didn't want to relinquish the initiative and felt that his king would be too vulnerable after 19...♔xf7 20 ♕h5+ g6 21 ♕h3 ♖ae8 22 ♗b2; e.g., 22...♕c8 23 ♕f3+ ♘f6 24 ♘b5!.

20 f3

If Black gets the time to castle, he will be better in view of his well-coordinated and active pieces.

20 ... ♕h5

There is no way back any more. Knight moves allow the deadly 21 ♖e1+, while even the tactical 20...0-0? 21 fxe4 ♗xh2+ 22 ♔xh2 ♕xf1 23 ♕xf1 ♖xf1 24 ♘c5 gives White a large advantage.

21 g3

White also has little choice:

1) 21 fxe4? ♕xh2+ 22 ♔f2 0-0+ gives Black an irresistible attack after 23 ♘f3 ♗xe4 or 23 ♔e3 ♕xg2.

2) After 21 h3, 21...♕e5 forces 22 f4 (22 fxe4 is not essentially different from line '1') 22...♕f6, when Black has a distinct advantage.

21 ... 0-0?!

A short check shows us Black really has to give up a piece, as 21...♘c5? loses to 22 ♖e1+ ♔f7 23 ♘f5! ♗f8 24 g4 ♕g6 25 ♗e3. However, there were two other versions of the same idea:

1) White easily deals with 21...♗xg3? 22 hxg3 0-0 (22...♕h3 23 ♖a2 is even worse for Black) 23 ♖a2! (23 fxe4 ♕h3 24 ♖f3 ♗xe4 25 ♕f1 ♕h5 26 ♗f4 ♖ad8 27 ♕c4+ is perhaps also good for White, but certainly less practical) 23...♘xg3 24 ♖h2 ♕g6 25 ♖g2 ♕d6 26 ♗b2!? and Black has some tactical chances, but certainly not enough compensation.

2) Black's bishops are too valuable, hence 21...♘xg3! is best:

2a) 22 ♕e1+ ♘e4 23 ♖a2 ♕e5! 24 ♕e3 ♘c3 and White can't profit from the e-file pin.

2b) 22 ♖e1+ ♔f7! (here 22...♘e4 23 ♖a2 is a different story; after 23...0-0 24 fxe4 White gains an important defensive tempo) 23 hxg3 (after 23 ♘b5 ♕xb5 24 ♕xd6 ♘e2+ and 25...♖hd8 or 23 ♘e6 ♘f5 24 ♘g5+ ♔g8 White's counterattack peters out quickly) 23...♗xg3 (23...♕h3? 24 ♘f5!) 24 ♖e2. Black has a strong initiative, but must also pay attention to his own king:

2b1) This is illustrated by the possible line 24...♖he8 25 ♗b2 (25 ♘e6? ♖xe6 26 ♕d7+ ♔f8 27 ♕xe6 ♗xf3 and White has only two checks) 25...♖xe2 (25...♖ad8 26 ♕c2 can lead to the same position) 26 ♕xe2 ♖e8 27 ♕g2 ♖e5 28 ♘e2, when Black should bail out into a drawish endgame by means of 28...♗h2+ (after 28...♖xe2? 29 ♕xe2 ♗xf3 30 ♕c4+ White either exchanges queens or gets a winning counterattack by 30...♗d5 31 ♖f1+) 29 ♕xh2 ♕xh2+ (29...♖g5+? 30 ♘g3 ♕xf3 31 ♖f1) 30 ♔xh2 ♖xe2+ 31 ♔g3 ♖e3.

2b2) Therefore 24...♖ad8!, with the immediate threat ...♗xf3, is wiser. After 25 ♕d3 ♖he8 (25...♗e5?! is weaker since after 26 ♗b2 White intends ♕f5+, and 26...♗xd4+? 27 ♗xd4 ♗xf3 28 ♕c4+! ♕d5 29 ♖f1 turns the tables completely) 26 ♖aa2 (after 26 ♕c4+ ♖d5! 27 ♗b2 ♖xe2 28 ♕xe2 ♖g5 the attack breaks through) 26...♗e5 White is in trouble, as 27 ♕f5+ is no longer possible due to 27...♕xf5 28 ♘xf5 ♖d1+.

2c) Better is 22 hxg3 0-0 (22...♗xg3? 23 ♕e2+) 23 ♖a2! *(D)* (23 ♕e1? is bad since after 23...♗e5, the f3-pawn falls).

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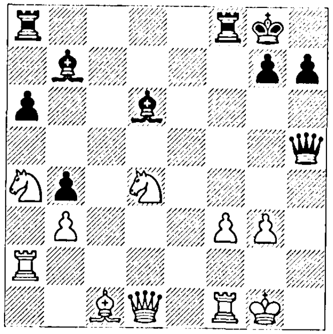


This is White's main defensive resource. After 23...♗xg3 24 ♖g2 ♗e5, compared with line '2b', Black's king is less vulnerable, but more importantly White's forces protect their own king better (the a1-rook is on g2 now). Kramnik gave the following line: 25 ♘c5 ♖ad8 (25...♖ac8 26 ♘ce6! is not so clear) 26 ♗e3 (after 26 ♘ce6 ♖d6 the knights get dangerously tangled up) 26...♗c8! 27 f4 ♕xd1 28 ♖xd1 ♗xf4 29 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 30 ♖gd2 (30 ♖xg7+? loses the pinned knight to 30...♔h8). Here Black's attack is finally over and the knight is ready to go to e6, but with only a single white pawn on the board a draw is the most likely result.

22 fxe4

22 ♘e6? loses to 22...♘xg3, while after 22 ♖a2 ♘c3 23 ♘xc3 bxc3 24 ♘e6 ♗c5+ (the alternative 24...♖xf3 25 ♕xd6 ♖xf1+ 26 ♔xf1 ♕f3+ 27 ♖f2 ♕h1+ is only a perpetual) Black is better without any complications.

22 ... ♕h3

Even the wild continuation 22...♖xf1+ 23 ♕xf1 ♗xg3?! 24 hxg3 ♗xe4 has to be treated seriously. 25 ♗f4? ♖e8! can be dangerous only for White; he must quickly return part of the booty. After 25 ♖a2 (25 ♕e2!? ♕h1+ 26 ♔f2 ♕g2+ 27 ♔e1! ♕g1+ 28 ♕f1 ♕xd4 29 ♕c4+ should also win) 25...♕h1+ 26 ♔f2 ♕h2+ 27 ♔e3 ♕xa2 28 ♔xe4 Black doesn't have enough pieces to conduct an attack.

23 ♘f3?

The position has undergone a dramatic change. Black's powerful bishops have White's king under fire (...♗xe4 and ...♗xg3 are in the air), while the queenside (the a1-rook, a4-knight and c1-bishop) is still asleep. On the other hand, White is currently a full piece up and has numerous options to choose from. Kasparov surprisingly loses his way in the complications; he had at least three better continuations than the text-move. We start with the weaker moves first:

1) 23 ♘f5? ♗xe4 24 ♖a2 (24 ♘e3 also loses, to 24...♗xg3 25 ♖a2 ♗f4) 24...♖xf5 25 ♖xf5 ♕xf5 26 ♕xd6 ♕f3 gives Black a decisive attack.

2) After 23 ♗f4? ♗xf4 (23...♗xe4? is bad, since after 24 ♕e2 both bishops are *en prise*) 24 ♖xf4 (24 gxf4 is no better in view of 24...♕e3+ 25 ♖f2 ♖xf4 26 ♕d2 ♖g4+ 27 ♔f1 ♕h3+) 24...♖xf4 25 gxf4 ♕e3+ 26 ♔f1 ♗xe4! 27 ♘e2 ♕f3+ 28 ♔e1 ♖e8 the attack is too strong.

Now the better moves:

3) 23 ♖a2!? and now:

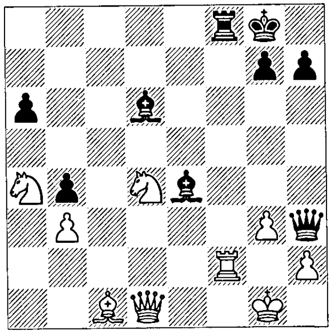
3a) 23...♗xg3? 24 ♘f5! (24 hxg3? ♗xe4 25 ♘f3 is line '3b1' below) 24...♖xf5 (24...♗e5 25 ♕d7 ♕xb3 26 ♖g2) 25 ♖xf5 ♗xe4 26 ♖g5 is insufficient for Black.

3b) 23...♗xe4 and now:

3b1) 24 ♘f3?! ♗xg3 25 hxg3 ♖ad8! 26 ♕e1 (26 ♕e2? ♕xg3+ {or 26...♗d3} 27 ♕g2 ♖xf3 is hopeless for White) 26...♖xf3 27 ♖xf3 ♗xf3 28 ♖h2 ♕c8!?, followed by ...♖e8, is not completely clear, but pretty dangerous for White anyway.

3b2) 24 ♖e1 is considered strictly the only move by Kramnik. Players such as Kasparov and Kramnik easily find followers, and Stamenković-Kosić, Yugoslav Ch (Nikšić) 1997 went 24...♗b7 (24...♖ae8 is weaker since after 25 ♖e3, with the idea ♖ae2, White forces the exchange of a pair of rooks) 25 ♕d3 ♖ac8 26 ♗g5 ♖f7 27 ♘e6 ♗b8 28 ♘ac5 ♗a7 29 ♗e3 ♖f3 30 ♖d1 ♕xe6! 31 ♘xe6 ♗xe3+ 32 ♔g2 ♖f6+ 33 ♔h3 ♖xe6 34 ♖e1 ♖ce8 35 ♕c4 ♔h8 36 g4 g5 37 ♖ee2? ♖f8! and Black's attack finally triumphed. It's certainly possible to improve the play on both sides, but the overall impression remains – with all the major pieces on the board White is subjected to permanent tactical harassment and although objectively he may be better, in a practical game with the clock ticking his task is unenviable.

3b3) In this respect 24 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 25 ♖f2 *(D)* is more sensible:



3b31) 25...♗xg3 26 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 27 ♕e2! (27 ♘e6+ ♕xe6 28 hxg3 ♗d5 29 ♘c5 ♕d6 doesn't give White winning chances since his remaining pawns are too vulnerable; after 27 ♕f1+ ♕xf1+ 28 ♔xf1 ♗xh2 29 ♘c5 ♗a8 30 ♘xa6 ♗e5 the h-pawn should save Black) and Black also has problems with his king; e.g., 27...♕h4 28 ♘e6+ ♔g8 29 ♘g5! ♗xh2+ 30 ♔f1 ♗g6 31 ♕e6+ ♔f8 32 ♘c5.

3b32) 25...♖xf2 26 ♔xf2 ♕xh2+ 27 ♔e3 ♗g6 28 ♘e2 ♗f8. Here White's king is permanently exposed, while Black's is safe and he has good chances to save the game.

4) 23 ♖xf8+!? ♖xf8 24 ♕e2 deserves serious attention; Black must go in for 24...♗xg3 25 ♘f5:

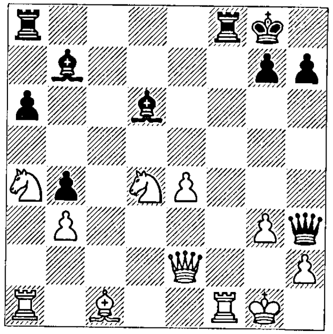
4a) The immediate 25...♗e5 26 ♗b2 ♗f4 (26...♗xe4 27 ♘e7+ ♔h8 28 ♗xe5 ♗d3 29 ♗xg7+! and 26...♗xb2 27 ♘xb2 ♕xb3 28 ♘d6 bring White welcome simplification) 27 ♗d4! beats off the attack, as after 27...♗xe4? 28 ♕c4+ it's Black who gets mated.

4b) Better is 25...♗b8! 26 ♘c5 ♗e5, and now:

4b1) 27 ♗b2 ♗xb2 28 ♕xb2 (28 ♖d1? loses to 28...♗c8: 29 ♖d3 ♗xf5! or 29 ♘e7+ ♔h8 30 ♘xc8 ♗e5 with the decisive threat ...♗xh2+) 28...♖xf5 29 exf5 ♕g4+ 30 ♔f1 ♕h3+ and Black has a perpetual, because 31 ♔e1 ♕e3+ 32 ♕e2 ♕c3+ enables him to take one of White's pieces with check.

4b2) The more ambitious 27 ♘xb7 ♗xa1 28 ♕d1 gives White winning chances.

5) The strongest move is 23 ♕e2! *(D)*.



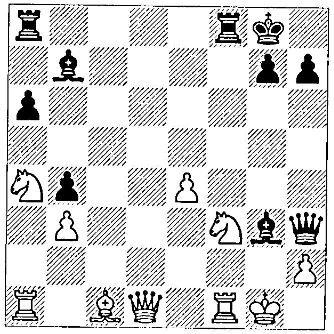
This is a better version of line '4'. Then Black's best is 23...♗xg3 (we already know 23...♗xe4? 24 ♗f4; 23...♗e5 24 ♗b2 ♗xg3 25 ♘f5! is insufficient for Black, while even after 23...♖fe8 24 ♘c5!? ♗xc5 25 ♕c4+ ♔h8 26 ♕xc5 ♗xe4 27 ♖a2 Black has nothing concrete) 24 ♘f5! (not 24 hxg3? ♕xg3+ 25 ♕g2 ♖xf1+ 26 ♔xf1 ♖f8+ 27 ♔g1 ♕e1+ 28 ♔h2, even though 28...♗xe4? 29 ♕xg7+! works nicely for White, since the simple 28...♖f2 wins) 24...♗e5 25 ♗b2 (25 ♖a2, intending 25...♖xf5? 26 ♕c4+, is also possible, but it's simpler to exchange one of the monsters) 25...♗xb2, when White has a choice, this time a pleasant one:

5a) 26 ♕xb2 ♖xf5 (after 26...♕g4+ 27 ♘g3 White consolidates) 27 ♖xf5 ♕g4+ 28 ♕g2 ♕xg2+ 29 ♔xg2 ♗xe4+ 30 ♖f3 leads to an endgame White should win.

5b) 26 ♘xb2!? ♕xb3 27 ♘d6, followed by ♘bc4, is even better. With his extra knight White himself starts attacking.

23 ... ♗xg3! *(D)*

Black on the other hand has no plausible alternatives; 23...♗xe4?! is insufficient in view of 24 ♕xd6 (24 ♕e2? allows the surprising reply 24...♕g4 25 ♘d4 ♗e5!, when Black is better) 24...♖xf3 25 ♖xf3 ♗xf3 26 ♖a2 ♖e8 27 ♕d2.



24 ♘c5?!

This puts White on the verge of defeat. 24 hxg3? loses outright to 24...♕xg3+ 25 ♔h1 ♗xe4, while after 24 ♖a2 Black even has, apart from 24...♗xe4 (line '3b1' above), 24...♗b8!, when the bishop will be just as dangerous on the neighbouring diagonal.

The correct move was again 24 ♕e2!:

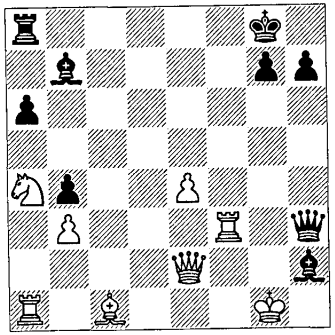
1) Now 24...♗b8 is ineffective due to 25 ♘c5 ♗a7 26 ♗e3.

2) 24...♗d6!? is more interesting. After 25 ♗b2 ♕g4+ 26 ♕g2 ♕xg2+ 27 ♔xg2 ♗xe4 28 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 29 ♖d4 (29 ♘b6 ♗c2) 29...♗c6 the nagging pin gives Black enough for the piece.

3) Black's main try is nevertheless 24...♖xf3 25 ♖xf3 ♗xh2+ *(D)*, and now:

3a) 26 ♔h1? ♗xe4! 27 ♕xe4 ♗g3+ 28 ♔g1 ♕h2+ 29 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 30 ♔e2 ♕e1+ 31 ♔d3 ♖d8+ is a pleasing king-hunt.

3b) 26 ♕xh2 ♕xf3 27 ♕g2 ♕d1+ (27...♕xb3 28 ♗h6, followed by ♘c5, and 27...♕xg2+ 28 ♔xg2 ♗xe4+ 29 ♔g1 are not dangerous for White) 28 ♔h2 ♕h5+ (28...♖c8? 29 ♕xg7+!) 29 ♔g1 ♖f8 30 ♗b2 g6 31 ♖f1. Black risks nothing by playing on, although a draw is the most probable result.



3c) Even the brave 26 ♔f2!? ♕h4+ 27 ♔f1 is playable:

3c1) 27...♗xe4?! 28 ♕c4+ ♔h8 29 ♘c5! ♗e5 30 ♕xe4 and without the queens, only White can be better.

3c2) 27...♗e5 28 ♕c4+ (28 ♗b2 ♗xb2 29 ♕xb2 ♕xe4 gives Black a winning attack) 28...♔h8 29 ♕c5 and Black has only a perpetual after 29...♕h1+.

3c3) 27...♕g4 28 ♔e1!? (White tries to use the threat ♖f8+ to escape from the danger zone; 28 ♕c4+ ♔h8 29 ♕f7 ♕g1+ 30 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 31 ♖f2 ♕xe4+ 32 ♗e3 ♕g4+ is only another perpetual) 28...♗g3+ (28...♕g1+? loses to 29 ♕f1 ♗g3+ 30 ♔d1 ♕d4+ 31 ♕d3) 29 ♔d1 ♖d8+ 30 ♗d2 ♗xe4! 31 ♖e3 (31 ♖f8+ ♖xf8 32 ♕xg4 ♗f3+ 33 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 is unclear; compared with line '3c1' White's king is further from the dangerous kingside pawns) 31...♗f5 32 ♕xg4 ♗xg4+ 33 ♔c2 ♗f5+ with a repetition.

The conclusion seems to be that Black has no advantage after 24 ♕e2!.

24 ... ♖xf3!
25 ♖xf3?

This is the last mistake; Black now wins by force. White probably underestimated the final attack with numerous quiet moves. The right move was 25 ♖a2!, as it forces the queens off the board. After 25...♖xf1+ 26 ♕xf1 ♕xf1+ 27 ♔xf1 ♖c8 28 ♗e3 ♗f4 White has two options:

1) 29 ♘xb7?! ♗xe3 30 ♖xa6 ♗f4 (30...♖c3 31 ♘d6 g6 32 e5 ♖xb3 33 ♖a8+ ♔g7 34 ♖b8 gives White too much counterplay; the e-pawn becomes a menace) 31 ♖b6 ♗xh2 32 ♖xb4 ♖b8 33 ♖b5 ♗f4 pins White's pieces to each other like Siamese twins. Black should win by advancing his kingside pawns.

2) The opposite-coloured bishops offer more hope; after 29 ♗xf4 ♖xc5 30 ♖a4 a5 31 ♗d6 ♖c3 32 ♖xa5 ♖xb3 33 ♖a4 White's drawing chances are very real; e.g., 33...♖d3 34 ♖a7! or 33...♖b1+ 34 ♔e2 b3 35 ♔d2 with the idea that 35...b2 is met by 36 ♖b4 ♗xe4 37 ♗e5.

25 ... ♕xh2+
26 ♔f1 ♗c6!

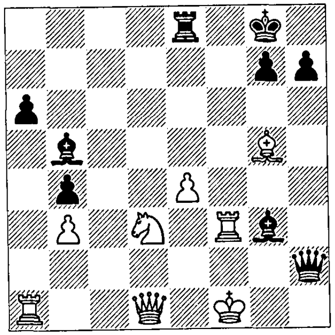
This powerful quiet move creates the threat of 27...♗b5+ with mate in four.

27 ♗g5

27 ♖a2 ♗b5+ 28 ♘d3 ♗xd3+ 29 ♕xd3 ♕h1+ mates, while after 27 ♗e3 ♗b5+ 28 ♘d3 ♖d8 29 ♗c5 (29 ♗g1 loses trivially to 29...♕h3+ 30 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 31 ♗f2 ♖xd3) 29...♕h1+ (not 29...♗xd3+? 30 ♕xd3!) 30 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 31 ♔e3 ♗xd3 32 ♗b6 ♖d7 White's exposed king will perish shortly.

The text-move takes d8 under control, but slightly more resilient was 27 ♖a5!? ♗c7! 28 ♕d4 (after 28 ♖a1 one way to win is 28...♖d8 29 ♕e2 ♗b5 30 ♘d3 ♕h1+ 31 ♔f2 ♗b6+ 32 ♔g3 ♖d6! and the attack is decisive) 28...♗xa5 29 ♗b2 ♕h6 (29...♗b5+!?) 30 ♖g3 ♖a7 31 ♘e6 ♕h1+ and in the worst case Black will be two pawns up in a won endgame.

27 ... ♗b5+
28 ♘d3 ♖e8! *(D)*



Another quiet move activates the rook and puts White's defences under decisive pressure. Black threatens ...♕h1+ and ...♖xe4(+) in an order depending on the circumstances.

29 ♖a2

A desperate attempt to protect f2, but the rook should have gone to a2 much earlier. However, other moves don't help either:

1) 29 ♖c1 blocks c1 and loses to 29...♕h1+ 30 ♔e2 ♖xe4+ 31 ♔d2 ♕g2+.

2) 29 ♗e3 ♖xe4 30 ♖f8+ ♔xf8 31 ♕f3+ ♖f4! 32 ♗xf4 ♗xd3+ 33 ♕xd3 ♕f2#.

3) After 29 ♕d2 ♕h1+ 30 ♔e2 ♖xe4+ 31 ♖e3 ♕h5+ 32 ♔f1 ♕xg5 Black will shortly mate White's king or win even more material.

29 ... ♕h1+

A computer finds the mate in four immediately: 29...♗xd3+! 30 ♖xd3 (30 ♕xd3 ♕h1+ 31 ♔e2 ♕e1#) 30...♕h1+ 31 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 32 ♔e3 ♖xe4#. However, even for a very strong human player, exchanging the powerful bishop is not the first thing that comes to mind, and Kramnik saw and played a longer forced win.

30 ♔e2 ♖xe4+

Here 30...♗xd3+? fails to 31 ♔d2!.

31 ♔d2

31 ♗e3 ♕g2+ 32 ♖f2 ♕xf2# is a pretty mate.

31 ... ♕g2+
32 ♔c1

32 ♘f2 ♖d4+ costs White too much material.

32 ... ♕xa2
33 ♖xg3 ♕a1+
34 ♔c2 ♕c3+
35 ♔b1 ♖d4
0-1

White was not interested in any final effects such as 36 ♗f6 ♗xd3+ 37 ♔a2 ♗b1+.

Summary

A real battle royal between the best two players in the world. Kasparov surprised his opponent in the opening with 17 ♗xe4!?, luring the knight onto an exposed central square and weakening the protection of the kingside at the same time. Kramnik, however, found a good antidote over the board, using a method outlined in the Summary to Game 10: an aggressive sacrificial counterattack (18...♗d6 and 19...♕xf7!). Apart from its psychological value, this continuation was also objectively the best; other plausible options had no doubt been meticulously analysed by Kasparov to the bitter end. As it was, from move 19 onwards both players were on their own.

The rising tension of the struggle first showed on Black; 21...0-0?! demonstrates that he was nervous about his king remaining on e8, and he decided to remove it from the centre as soon as possible. Instead, 21...♘xg3! is better not only for tactical reasons, but also because of general considerations – it makes White's kingside more vulnerable and also reduces the material deficit. However, inaccuracies in such a complicated position are more or less inevitable, and even after 21...0-0?! White's task in practice remains difficult despite the large number of defensive options. Kasparov himself uses such intuitive sacrifices often and very successfully (Games 7 and 11). In this game he was surprisingly on the receiving end, as the volatile situation simply couldn't stand three mistakes in a row. The missed opportunities show what went wrong: 23 ♕e2!, 24 ♕e2! and 25 ♖a2! all would have enabled White's major pieces to join in the defence.

Game 20

Jan Timman – John van der Wiel

Dutch Championship, Amsterdam 1996

Sicilian Defence, Rossolimo Variation [B31]

1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3 ♘c6
3 ♗b5

A full-blooded alternative to the classical 3 d4. One only has to recall how difficult it is for White in the English set-ups with ...♗b4 to gain even a slight edge, to appreciate that the extra tempo gives White chances to fight for an advantage.

3 ... g6
4 0-0 ♗g7
5 ♖e1 ♘f6

An altogether different type of position arises after 5...e5 6 ♗xc6 dxc6 7 d3. After Black's most common reply 7...♕e7 White's chances to wrest the initiative lie on the queenside and his best continuation is 8 a3, or possibly even 8 b4!? cxb4 9 a3.

6 e5

Nowadays White more often plays 6 c3!?, the usual continuation being 6...0-0 7 d4 d5 8 e5 ♘e4 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 ♘bd2 cxd4 11 cxd4 c5 with approximate equality.

6 ... ♘d5
7 ♘c3

This is logical; White continues his development and forces the d5-knight to declare its intentions. The less energetic 7 d3 0-0 8 ♘bd2 d6 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 doesn't cause Black any problems.

7 ... ♘c7

7...♘xc3?! 8 dxc3 0-0 9 ♗g5 gives White a sizeable space advantage.

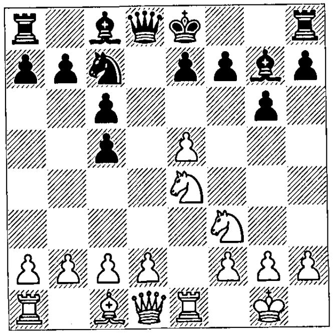
8 ♗xc6 dxc6

After 8...bxc6 9 d4! (9 ♘e4 ♘e6 10 d3 0-0 promises White little) 9...cxd4 10 ♕xd4 ♘e6 11 ♕h4 Black's bishop-pair is rather ineffective and White's central outpost on e5 combined with pressure on the d-file and a possible kingside attack are more relevant factors.

9 ♘e4! *(D)*

Timman had previously suffered an unpleasant experience with 9 h3 0-0 10 d3 b6 11 ♗e3 ♘e6 12 ♕d2? ♘d4 13 ♕d1 h6 14 ♗f4 ♗e6 15 ♘d2 ♗d5 16 ♘e2 ♕d7 17 c3 ♘f5 18 ♕c2 ♖ad8 19 ♖ad1 ♘h4 20 f3 g5 21 ♗h2 ♘g6 22 ♘c1 f5! and Black was clearly on top in Timman-Van der Wiel, Brussels blitz 1987. This example shows that Black's position is fundamentally sound and if he manages to deploy his forces successfully, he has nothing to fear. White must aim to disrupt his opponent's peaceful development, hence the text-move.

B



9 ... b6!?

Black wants to develop (and exchange) his c8-bishop before he puts his knight on e6. Although he achieves this, he has to forfeit his castling rights. It remains an open question if Black shouldn't prefer the simpler 9...♘e6 10 d3 0-0 11 ♗e3 b6 12 ♕d2 f5!? 13 exf6 exf6 14 ♗h6 a5! 15 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 16 ♘g3 ♖a7 17 ♖e4 ♘d4 18 ♘xd4 cxd4 19 ♕f4 c5 20 ♖ae1 ♖af7 21 h4 ♕c7, Timman-Lautier, Pamplona 1999/00. White's temporary initiative has evaporated and the game quickly headed towards a draw.

10 ♘f6+ ♔f8
11 ♘e4 ♗g4

White's knight manoeuvre has cost him two tempi, but the artificial castling, which Black must undertake, is even more time-consuming. Although now White must meet the threat ...♗xe5, the inconspicuous 11...h6!? 12 d3 ♔g8 also deserves attention.

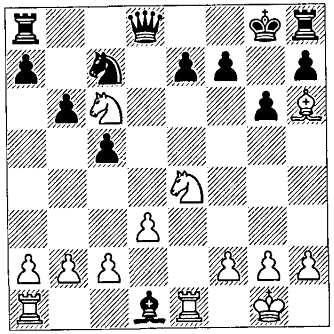
12 d3!

This tactical idea of Timman's had revived interest in the whole variation about a year earlier. Weaker is 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 ♘e6 14 d3 ♕d5 15 ♗d2 ♖d8 16 ♗c3 ♗xe5 17 ♘xc5 ♕xf3 18 ♘xe6+ fxe6, when Black was better in Glek-Wells, Wijk aan Zee 1995. The alternative 12 ♘c3 ♘e6 13 h3 ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 ♘d4 15 ♕e4 gives White equality at best.

12 ... ♕d5

The point of White's previous move shows after 12...♗xe5? 13 ♘xe5! ♗xd1 14 ♗h6+ ♔g8 (14...♔e8 15 ♘xc6 f5 16 ♖axd1 traps Black's queen and the resulting endgame a pawn down is hopeless) 15 ♘xc6 *(D)*.

B



15...♗xc2 (15...♕d7 16 ♘f6+ exf6 17 ♘e7+ ♕xe7 18 ♖xe7 ♘d5 19 ♖d7 and White gets his piece back with a decisive advantage, because Black's king and the h8-rook are paralysed) 16 ♘xd8! (16 ♘c3? e6 17 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 18 ♗g5 ♔g7! 19 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 let Black off the hook in the game Timman-Kramnik, Riga Tal mem 1995) 16...♖xd8 17 ♘xc5! bxc5 18 ♖xe7 ♘d5 19 ♖xa7 ♘f6 20 h3 and until Black manages to free his pieces from the corner, the a-pawn makes all the running.

The e-pawn is unappetizing after 12...♗xf3 13 ♕xf3 ♗xe5?! 14 ♘xc5! ♗f6 (the best move; 14...♕d6? is bad due to 15 ♖xe5 and 14...♗g7 15 ♘e6+ ♘xe6 16 ♖xe6 c5 17 ♗g5 puts Black under too much strain) 15 ♘e4. The more the position opens up, the more uncomfortable Black is bound to feel with his unconnected rooks.

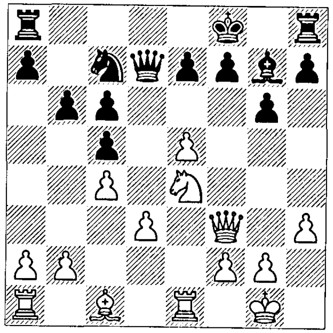
Van der Wiel's move is new, but a more natural continuation is 12...♘e6! 13 ♘ed2 ♕d5 14 h3 ♗xf3 15 ♘xf3 ♖d8 16 ♕e2 h6 17 ♗e3 ♔g8 18 c4 ♕xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♖xd3 20 ♖ad1 ♖xd1 21 ♖xd1 f5 22 exf6 ♗xf6 23 ♖d7 ♔f7 with full equality, Lutz-Piket, Wijk aan Zee 1995.

13 c4

White now loses control over d4, but the queen can't be left unmolested on d5 for long. The strategically ideal 13 ♘ed2 (as in Lutz-Piket in the previous note) now allows 13...♗xe5! 14 c4 ♕d6 15 ♘e4 ♗xf3 (15...♕d8? 16 ♘xc5! is even worse for Black than the line 12...♗xe5? 13 ♘xe5!, and 15...♕e6? 16 ♘eg5 ♕f5 17 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 18 ♘xe5 ♗xd1 19 ♘gxf7 also wins for White) 16 ♕xf3 ♕d4, when White has nothing concrete for the pawn.

13 ... ♕d7
14 h3 ♗xf3
15 ♕xf3 *(D)*

B



15 ... h6?!

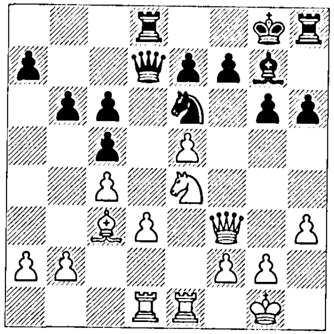
15...♗xe5? is still bad due to 16 ♘xc5, but it was more logical to start with 15...♘e6. Black then intends ...♖d8, so White more or less has to play 16 ♘g5!? ♘xg5 17 ♗xg5 ♔g8! (17...♕e6 is worse since after 18 a3 h6 19 ♗f4, with the idea b4, Black is still behind in development and can have problems if White opens up the position quickly enough). Now 18 e6 fxe6 19 ♕g4 ♔f7 is unconvincing for White and otherwise Black's position is a tough nut to crack. Van der Wiel's move allows White to develop harmoniously while keeping more pieces on the board.

16 ♗d2?!

Timman rightly points out that 16 b3! would have been more accurate. Then 16...♖d8 (the e-pawn is only temporarily sensitive; after 16...♕d4 17 ♖b1 it can't be taken anyway; 16...♗xe5 17 ♘xc5 bxc5 18 ♖xe5 ♕d4 runs into the clever 19 ♖e1!) 17 ♗b2 enables White to save time in comparison with the later course of the game and promises him some advantage.

16 ... ♖d8
17 ♗c3 ♘e6
18 ♖ad1 ♔g8 *(D)*

W



Black has managed to keep the centre closed, but his h8-rook is still passive. White must therefore use the time his opponent needs for full consolidation to harass him on the flanks.

19 h4!?

As Black wants to play ...h5, ...♗h6 and ...♔g7 anyway, forcing it seems superfluous. Another drawback of White's move will become clear eleven moves later – it weakens the light squares on the kingside. However, the text-move has the advantage of taking the sting out of ...♘d4, which shows up after 19 a3 a5 20 b3:

1) 20...♔h7 21 h4! (after 21 ♕xf7? ♖hf8 22 ♘f6+ exf6 23 ♕xd7 ♖xd7 24 exf6 ♗xf6 White loses a piece) and Black must allow the pawn to advance further, as 21...h5? fails tactically to 22 ♕xf7 ♖hf8 23 ♕xe6!.

2) 20...h5 21 ♗b2 gives White the game position with an extra tempo and prospects of maintaining a pull.

3) 20...♘d4! is critical:

3a) 21 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 22 e6 f5 23 ♘g3 ♕d6 24 h4 h5 (after 24...♗e5 Black has to reckon with 25 ♘xf5!?) 25 ♘e2 ♗e5 26 b4 axb4 27 axb4 ♔g7! and Black is better, since White's pieces lack coordination.

3b) 21 ♕g3 (21 ♕f4 is met by 21...♕c7!) 21...♔h7 (21...♘xb3?! is playing with fire due to 22 e6) 22 ♕h4!? (22 h4 ♖he8 23 h5 gxh5, with ...♕g4 in the air, gets White nowhere) 22...♖he8 23 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 24 ♘g5+ with a balanced endgame.

19 ... h5

19...♘d4 20 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 21 e6 is different now, as after 21...f5 White has 22 h5! with a dangerous attack.

20 a3 a5

Black naturally doesn't want to allow b4 without a fight.

21 b3 ♗h6

22 ♗b2

Paradoxically by decreasing his control over b4, White realizes the intended break. The immediate 22 b4?! axb4 23 axb4 cxb4 24 ♗xb4 is barely playable, since after 24...♘d4 25 ♕g3 ♘c2 26 e6 ♕xe6 27 ♘g5 ♕g4 (27...♕c8? 28 ♘xf7!) 28 ♕xg4 (28 ♗xe7 ♕xg3 29 fxg3 ♖e8 is similar) 28...hxg4 29 ♗xe7 ♖e8 30 ♖e4!? (30 ♖e2 f6 31 ♖xc2 ♖xe7 gives Black a pleasant endgame) 30...f5 31 ♖e2 White just about manages to keep an uneasy balance. 22 ♖e2 with the idea ♖b2 and b4 is rather heavy-handed; Black can counter with a timely ...♘d4.

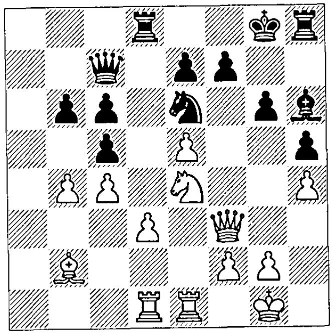
22 ... ♕c7

Black's queen must leave the potentially exposed square; the line 22...♔g7 23 b4 axb4 24 axb4 ♖hf8? 25 bxc5 bxc5 26 ♘xc5! nicely shows why.

23 b4 axb4

24 axb4 *(D)*

B



24 ... ♔g7

24...cxb4? 25 d4 is too dangerous for Black, as his pieces are not ready to cope with the advancing pawns. Now, however, White is again faced with the problem of making progress.

25 b5!?

After 25 bxc5 bxc5 the doubled pawns cover a lot of central squares and are more or less untouchable; 26 ♗a3 ♘d4 and ...♘c2 costs White an exchange. Timman again uses a clever tactical device.

25 ... cxb5

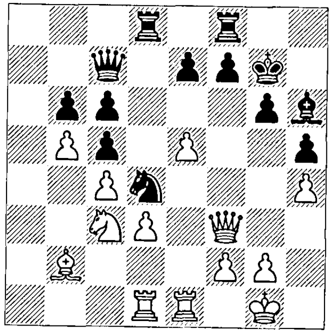
Now White realizes his plan. Although this in itself is far from decisive, it prompts us to look for alternatives:

1) 25...♘d4?! is suspect as Black shouldn't exchange his strong blockading knight without a very good reason. After 26 ♗xd4 (26 e6!?) 26...♖xd4 27 ♘c3! ♖xh4 28 bxc6 ♖c8 29 ♘d5 ♕xc6 30 ♖b1 White's d5-knight dominates the proceedings and he wins the pawn back, as 30...♖b8?! runs into 31 e6 with double threats ♕xf7+ and ♕g3.

2) 25...♖hf8 is more to the point. 26 ♘c3!? (26 ♘d6? is just a loss of time in view of 26...♔g8, while after 26 bxc6 ♕xc6 White's knight will not get to b5 to control the d4-square) 26...♘d4 *(D)* (26...cxb5 27 ♘xb5 transposes to the game) and now:

2a) A possible try is 27 ♕g3 ♘f5!? (the idea is that after 27...e6 28 bxc6 ♕xc6 29 ♘e4 White returns his knight to the centre with the queens on; 27...cxb5 28 ♘d5 ♕b7 29 e6 f6 30 ♗xd4 cxd4 31 ♖b1 bxc4 32 dxc4 gives White good compensation) and if White has to put his queen on the h-file to avoid repetition, he can hardly be better.

W



2b) The logical move 27 ♕e4 gives Black a choice:

2b1) 27...cxb5?! is not ideal in view of 28 ♘d5 (28 e6 f5 29 ♘xb5 fxe4 30 ♘xc7 exd3 31 ♖xd3 also gives White an advantage, but the main move is more incisive) 28...♕c6 29 e6! (29 ♗xd4 e6!? 30 ♘c3 ♕xe4 31 ♖xe4 b4 32 ♘b5 cxd4 33 ♘xd4 ♖a8 gives Black sufficient counterplay) 29...♕xe6 (after 29...fxe6? 30 ♗xd4+ cxd4 31 ♕xg6+! ♔xg6 32 ♘xe7+ ♔f6 33 ♘xc6 Black has to give up the exchange under unfavourable circumstances; 29...bxc4 30 dxc4 is also good for White) 30 ♗xd4+ (30 ♕xe6 fxe6 31 ♘c7?! ♖f6 32 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 is far from clear) 30...cxd4 31 ♕xe6 (31 ♕xd4+ ♕f6 is OK for Black) 31...fxe6 32 ♘c7 bxc4 33 ♘xe6+ and dxc4 with fair winning chances for White.

2b2) White's knight should be denied access to the d5-square; thus 27...e6! is safer, when 28 bxc6 ♕xc6 29 ♕xc6 ♘xc6 30 ♘b5 ♖a8 is equal.

26 ♘d6! ♖hf8

27 ♘xb5 ♕c8

28 ♕e4

White has improved the position of his knight and centralized his queen. However, Black's position remains solid, as the central break promises only simplification and drawish endgames.

28 ... ♔h7

Black could have played 28...♕a8!?, as after 29 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 30 d4 cxd4 (30...♖a4?! is playing with fire due to 31 d5 ♖xc4 32 ♗c3!) 31 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 32 ♗xd4 ♖fc8 33 e6+ ♔f8 a draw is not far away.

29 ♖a1

This gives Black some activity, but doesn't change the assessment. After 29 g3 ♕a8 the position is equal.

29 ... ♘f4

30 ♖a3 ♕g4!?

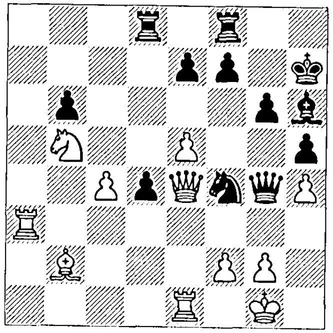
This is best. Black doesn't need to ruin his pawns with 30...♕f5 31 ♕xf5 gxf5 32 d4, which gives White chances for an edge.

31 d4

Forced. 31 g3? is bad because of 31...♘xd3!.

31 ... cxd4 *(D)*

W



32 ♖g3?!

With the time-control approaching, the scales start to swing more violently. White's optimistic move is based on a tactical trap, but it could have landed Timman in trouble. The solid 32 ♘xd4 maintains the equilibrium; for example, 32...♕c8!? 33 ♘c6 ♖d2 34 ♗c3 ♘e2+ 35 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 36 ♕xe2 ♕xc6.

32 ... ♕xh4?

The losing mistake. Van der Wiel most probably overlooked White's 35th move. After the prudent retreat 32...♕c8! (Black can also play 32...♕e6, as after 33 ♗c1? ♕xc4 34 ♘a3 ♘e2+ White is simply two pawns down) Black is better and White must be very resourceful to stay alive: 33 ♘xd4 ♕xc4 34 ♖f3! ♕b4 (34...♘d5? loses an exchange to 35 ♘e6!; after both 34...♕a2 35 ♗a3 ♕d5 36 ♘c6 and 34...♘e6 35 ♘c6 ♕xe4 36 ♖xe4 ♖d7 37 ♖b4 ♖b7 38 ♖fb3 White just about manages to get his pawn back and scrape a draw) 35 ♖b3 (after 35 ♗c3 ♕c5 36 ♗b2 ♘d5!? 37 e6 f6, despite White's undeniable tactical chances, Black is still on top) 35...♕c5 36 g3!? (after 36 ♘c6, 36...♘d3! simplifies advantageously) 36...♘d5 (36...♘e6 37

♘xe6 fxe6 38 ♖e2 is unimpressive for Black, since his pawns are weak and his bishop can be later locked out with f4) 37 f4. Although his active pieces do not fully compensate for the missing pawn, White has reasonable chances to save the game.

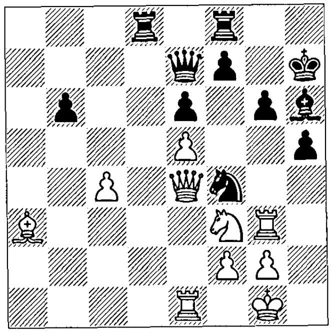
33 ♘xd4 e6

The only defence against ♘f3.

34 ♘f3

Perhaps Van der Wiel relied upon 34 ♗a3? ♖xd4! 35 ♕xd4 ♘e2+ and didn't realize White could reverse the move-order.

34 ... ♕e7
35 ♗a3! *(D)*



Simple, but pretty and above all effective. As the bishop is taboo, Black loses the exchange and his position falls apart.

35 ... ♕d7

35...♕xa3? is met by 36 ♘g5+.

36 ♗xf8 ♖xf8
37 ♘g5+ ♗xg5
38 ♖xg5 ♕d2

After 38...♘d3 the simplest is 39 ♖xh5+ ♔g7 40 ♖h3! ♘xe1 41 ♕h4 with mate.

39 ♖g3

39 ♖e3?! ♘e2+ only serves to complicate matters.

39 ... ♔g7

39...♖d8 is somewhat more resilient, although White is also winning after 40 ♖f3 ♖d4 41 ♕e3 g5 42 ♕xd2 ♖xd2 43 ♖b1.

40 ♖ee3 h4
41 ♖gf3 ♘h5

41...g5 42 ♖xf4!? gxf4 43 ♕xf4 gives White a decisive attack, as Black's king is too exposed.

42 ♕xh4 ♕c1+
43 ♔h2 ♖h8
44 ♖h3 ♖a8

The only defence against g4; now White himself must beware of ...♖a1.

45 ♖c3 ♕f1
46 ♖a3! ♖c8

46...♖xa3 47 ♖xa3 ♕e2 48 ♕d4 renews the g4 threat, and Black will quickly lose his b6-pawn.

47 ♖hf3 ♕e2

48 ♖xf7+! was the main threat and it would force mate after both 47...♖h8 and 47...♖xc4.

48 ♕g5 1-0

Among White's numerous threats (for example g4 and ♖a7), 49 ♖xf7+! is again the deadliest.

Summary

The game shows an intertwining of strategic aims and tactical motifs, which is typical for modern chess. In this sense White's 12 d3! and 25 b5!? both deserve mention (see also the Summary of Game 8). An even more notable feature of the heavy positional struggle is Black's uncastled king. Due to the semi-closed nature of the position, the king in itself was relatively safe on f8 and its subsequent locations; the main drawback lay elsewhere. The temporary passivity of the h8-rook enabled Timman to probe Black's weaknesses on both flanks. As his advantage was not a long-term one, precision and good timing were required; after 16 ♗d2?! the bishop landed on the ideal b2-square two moves later and Black gradually managed to untangle his forces.

With 24...♔g7 Black managed to equalize; this is borne out by the fact that despite Black spurning the possibly more accurate 25...♖hf8 White still couldn't boast any substantial inroads. The tension grew and with the opening of the centre after 31 d4 the pieces acquired more scope and the role of tactics increased again. This brought about oversights (32 ♖g3?! and 32...♕xh4?) and a combinational decision (35 ♗a3!). Psychologically it is surprising how often an error provokes the opponent to make a mistake of his own. Van der Wiel was the last one to go wrong and White finished him off efficiently.

Game 21

Peter Svidler – Igor Glek

Haifa 1996

French Defence, Tarrasch Variation [C07]

1 e4 e6
2 d4 d5
3 ♘d2 c5
4 ♘gf3 cxd4
5 exd5 ♕xd5
6 ♗c4 ♕d6

This line started appearing more often in the 1980s, when French fans wanted to get livelier positions than those with an isolated d5-pawn, which were heavily contested in the 1974 Karpov-Korchnoi match. Part of the line's appeal was that Black could often spice up the game with queenside castling, although in the late 1990s this approach lost most of its popularity. Games like this one show a few reasons why. The text is the most usual move, although Dreev used to experiment with 6...♕d8 7 0-0 a6 8 ♘b3 ♕c7.

7 0-0 ♘f6

7...♘c6 usually transposes to the game, but Black can also reach the aforementioned line by 7...a6 8 ♘b3 ♕c7; sometimes he develops his knight to e7 after ...♗d6.

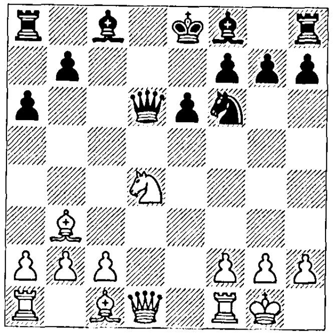
8 ♘b3 ♘c6
9 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4
10 ♘xd4

The approximately equal queenless position after 10 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 11 ♘xd4 ♗d7 is not enough for White, who has greater ambitions.

10 ... a6

To understand the respective nuances and differences between the text-move and 10...♗d7 or 10...♕c7 requires consummate theoretical expertise; suffice it to say Glek has played all three moves.

11 ♗b3 *(D)*



Naturally White also has other moves. However, as, for example, 11 c3 ♕c7 12 ♕e2 ♗d6 allows Black to castle kingside safely, the most popular options are currently the text-move and 11 ♖e1.

11 ... ♗d7

However, this decision is crucial in determining the further course of the game. At the time the Haifa event took place, the line 11...♕c7 12 ♖e1 ♗d6 13 ♘f5 ♗xh2+ 14 ♔h1 0-0 15 ♘xg7 ♖d8 16 ♕f3 ♔xg7 17 ♗h6+ ♔g6 18 c3 had suffered a heavy blow in Adams-Dreev, Wijk aan Zee 1996: after 18...♘d5?, 19 ♖ad1! f5 20 ♗c1! gave White a strong, probably decisive attack. However, later on attempts to revive the whole variation were successful and Glek took it up himself: 18...♘h5! 19 ♗c1 ♗f4 20 g4 ♘g3+ 21 fxg3 ♗xc1 22 ♖axc1 b6 23 ♗c2+ ♔g7 24 ♗e4 ♖a7 25 ♖c2 ♗b7 26 ♖h2 ♗xe4 27 ♕xe4 ♕b7! 28 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 and Black easily held the endgame in Brodsky-Glek, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

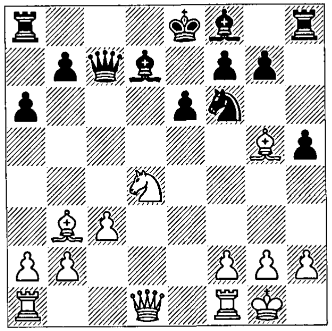
12 c3 ♕c7
13 ♗g5

The more often played 13 ♕f3 ♗d6 14 h3 0-0-0 15 ♗g5 ♗h2+ 16 ♔h1 ♗e5 17 ♖fe1 h6 (here 17...h5?! would actually transpose to the game continuation) 18 ♗h4 ♗f4!? 19 ♗xf6 gxf6 20 ♖e4 ♗e5 21 ♖ae1 can lead to very similar positions to the text-move. Here Black was perhaps slightly worse, but not without counterplay, in Agnos-Akopian, Ubeda 1996.

13 ... h5?! *(D)*

This idea, albeit typical for the given line, is a rather dubious novelty. Although it deprives White's queen of the h5-square after ♗xf6 and possibly intends ...♘g4, its drawbacks are more significant. Black's move is time-consuming and it allows White to finish his development undisturbed and effectively deploy his rooks in the centre. Glek naturally wanted to improve on 13...♘e4 14 ♗h4, when after 14...♕f4? 15 g3 ♕h6 16 ♕e2 ♘d6, as in Ivanchuk-Glek, Frunze 1988, he himself suggested the strong 17 ♕e5!, hampering any normal development because 17...f6? allows 18 ♘xe6 fxe5 19 ♘c7#. Even the better 14...♗d6 15 ♕e2 ♘c5 16 ♘f5 ♗xh2+ 17 ♔h1 0-0 18 ♘xg7! ♕e5 19 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♘h5 ♘xb3 21 axb3 didn't fully solve Black's problems in Wahls-Lautier, Biel 1990.

Black should seek solace in the more sober alternatives. 13...♗d6 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♕h5 ♕c5 16 ♕f3 ♕e5 17 g3 0-0-0 18 ♖fe1 ♕g5 19 ♗c4 ♔b8 20 ♗f1 ♖c8 21 ♖ad1, as in Kudrin-Remlinger, Philadelphia 1992, is not too ideal either, as White has relocated his bishop advantageously and he can play not only against Black's king, but also on the d-file. Black did better after 13...0-0-0!? 14 ♗xf6 (14 ♕f3, as in the note to White's 13th move, is more flexible) 14...gxf6 15 ♕h5 ♗e8 16 ♖ad1 ♗e7 (not 16...♕c5? 17 ♘xe6! fxe6 18 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 19 ♖d1+) 17 ♖fe1 ♕c5 18 ♕e2 ♗d7 19 ♗c2 ♗d6 20 ♗e4 f5 21 ♗f3 ♕c7 22 h3 ♔b8 in Tzermiadianos-Kotronias, Ankara Z 1995. Here, despite all the time Black has lost with the bishops, his queen takes part in the defence and enhances his control of the d-file. White's king can also become vulnerable via the dark squares.



14 ♕f3 ♗d6

Now Black will be simply a tempo down compared with the more usual positions referred to in the note to White's 13th move. 14...♘g4?! is a seemingly consistent follow-up to Black's previous move, but after 15 g3 (15 ♗f4? ♗d6 is harmless for Black) he will soon have big problems with his uncastled king, since 15...f6 16 ♗xe6 fxg5 17 ♕f7+ ♔d8 18 ♖ad1 gives White a winning attack.

15 h3 ♗h2+

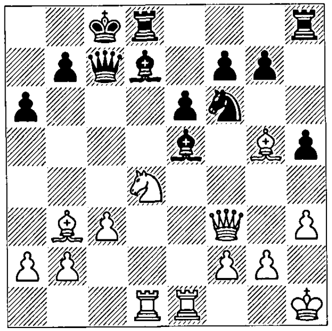
This is a typical manoeuvre, since the king's position on h1 gives Black additional tactical chances. 15...0-0-0 is insufficient since after 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♕xf6 Black doesn't have enough for the pawn due to White's centralization; e.g., 17...♖dg8 18 ♕xf7 ♖xg2+? 19 ♔xg2 ♗c6+ 20 f3 ♕xf7 21 ♗xe6+ ♕xe6 22 ♘xe6 ♖g8+ 23 ♔h1 and White consolidates with a further ♘d4.

16 ♔h1 ♗e5

17 ♖fe1 0-0-0

The missing move is starting to have an effect. 17...♗xd4 18 cxd4 ♗c6? would give Black a satisfactory position without the insertion of ♖fe1 and ...h5, but here it fails to 19 d5. And although 17...♘g4 forces 18 g3, Black is left with no follow-up, as 18...♘xf2+ just loses a piece to 19 ♔g2!. Therefore the king finally moves to relative safety.

18 ♖ad1 *(D)*



The coordination of White's forces is not only aesthetic, but also dangerous. Black must tread with care.

18 ... ♖dg8?

Typical of Glek's active style – the unpinned knight already aims for g4 and the rook is supposed to further his kingside counterplay. However, this decentralization puts both rooks out of play and in a higher sense is probably already the losing move, as it's difficult to improve Black's play later on. Black must move his rook anyway, but in view of the coming combinational fireworks, 18...♖de8!? was more prudent. Then 19 ♕e2 is not an ideal reaction due to 19...♘g4! 20 ♘f3 ♗f6, since with ...♗c6 in the air Black can quickly whip up a ferocious attack; e.g., 21 ♗xf6 gxf6 22 g3 ♗c6 23 ♔g1 h4!. The purpose of the rook on e8 shows up if White plays the analogous 19 ♕e3 ♘g4! 20 hxg4 hxg4+ 21 ♔g1 f6, since with the e6-pawn protected Black regains the piece and has little to fear. White is therefore well advised to take the ...♘g4 sortie seriously and play 19 ♕d3, when after 19...♗f4 Black is still somewhat worse.

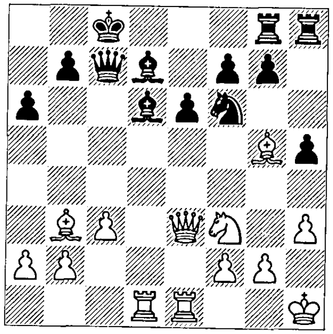
19 ♕e3!

The first of a series of strong preparatory moves: White's queen not only attacks the bishop, but also eyes the a7-square.

19 ... ♗d6

Forced, as 19...♘g4 20 hxg4 hxg4+ 21 ♔g1 gets Black nowhere and 19...♗xd4? is a huge positional concession, and after 20 ♕xd4 a dark-square invasion will decide quickly.

20 ♘f3! *(D)*



20 ... ♗c5

There was nothing better. White was threatening not so much ♕a7 as ♕d2 and especially ♖xd6 followed by ♗f4.

1) 20...♗c6?! (Black must retain his valuable dark-squared bishop) 21 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 22 ♗f4 is treacherous for Black:

1a) 22...♕e7 23 ♕a7 ♖d8 (23...♗xf3 loses on the spot to 24 ♗a4!) 24 ♘e5 ♘d5 25 ♗h2 gives White a decisive attack.

1b) Not much better is 22...♕d8 23 ♕a7, and now:

1b1) 23...♘d5 24 ♗xd5 (the simple 24 ♕a8+ ♔d7 25 ♘e5+ ♔e7 26 ♗g5+ ♘f6 27 ♘xc6+ bxc6 28 ♕xc6 is also good enough) 24...♗xd5 (24...♕xd5? 25 ♕b8+ ♔d7 26 ♕c7+ ♔e8 27 ♗d6 mates) 25 ♖d1! g5 26 c4 gxf4 27 cxd5 and White breaks through via the c-file.

1b2) 23...g5 24 ♕a8+ (even stronger than the technical 24 ♘xg5) 24...♔d7 25 ♘e5+ ♔e7 26 ♘xc6+ bxc6 27 ♕xc6 and White wins easily enough since after 27...gxf4 28 ♖xe6+! ♔f8 29 ♖xf6 Black will lose most of his remaining pawns.

2) After 20...♘g4 21 ♕d2 (the misguided 21 hxg4? hxg4+ 22 ♘h4 f6 23 ♗xe6 ♖e8! is even dangerous for White) Black has nothing better than transposing into the game with 21...♗c5.

21 ♕d2 ♘g4!?

Black logically pursues his own active aims. The passive 21...♗c6 22 ♗f4 ♕b6 23 ♘e5! ♖d8 24 ♕e2 is no improvement, since White's threat ♘xf7 is hard to meet:

1) 24...♗b5 25 c4 ♗e8 (25...♖xd1 26 ♖xd1 ♗e8 27 ♘xf7! ♗xf7 28 ♕e5 ♘d7 29 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 30 ♗a4+ ♔e7 31 ♗g5+ mates) 26 ♘xf7! ♗xf7 27 ♕e5 ♗d4 28 ♕b8+ ♔d7 29 ♗c7! ♕xc7 (29...♖xb8 30 ♗xb6 leaves Black a pawn down in a hopeless endgame) 30 ♖xd4+ ♘d5 (30...♔c6 31 ♗a4+ ♔b6 32 c5+!) 31 ♖xd5+ exd5 32 ♖e7+ and White will have both an attack and a material advantage. These lines highlight the excellent coordination of all White's pieces; sacrificial solutions come naturally in such cases.

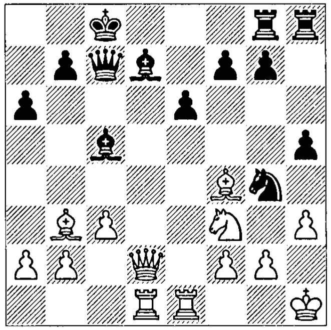
2) 24...♖xd1 25 ♖xd1 ♘e4 is only slightly better, since White stops Black's counterplay with 26 ♔h2! (26 ♘xf7 ♖e8 27 ♔h2! is also possible). Now 26...♘xf2 (26...♗xf2? 27 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 28 ♗c2 is trivial, while after 26...♖e8, 27 ♕xh5 with ideas like ♕xf7 or ♘c4 and ♕e5 will overcome the defence shortly) 27 ♘c4 ♕a7 loses nicely to 28 ♘b6+! ♕xb6 29 ♗xe6+! ♗d7 30 ♕e5, while it's difficult to suggest any constructive alternative for Black.

22 ♗f4! *(D)*

White ignores his opponent's threats and proceeds with his own attack.

22 ... ♘xf2+

After 22...♕d8 23 ♖e5!? (the mundane 23 hxg4 hxg4+ 24 ♘h2 is also good) Black should transpose into the game by 23...♘xf2+ 24 ♔h2,



since 23...♘xe5 24 ♘xe5 ♗c6 25 ♘xf7 ♕xd2 26 ♖xd2 is completely hopeless for him.

23 ♔h2 ♕d8

Forced; 23...♕c6? is weak due to 24 ♘e5 ♘g4+ 25 hxg4 hxg4+ 26 ♔g3.

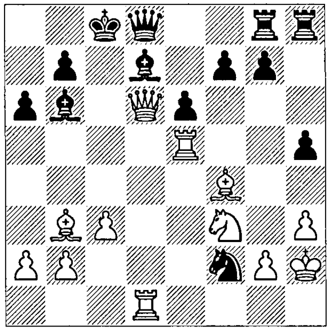
24 ♖e5

Stronger than 24 ♘e5? ♘g4+! with complications.

24 ... ♗b6

There is nothing else; after 24...♗a7, 25 ♕d6! ♗c6 (25...♕c7 26 ♖c5!) 26 ♗xe6+ fxe6 27 ♕xe6+ ♗d7 28 ♕c4+ wins the queen, because 28...♕c7? 29 ♖e8+ mates immediately.

25 ♕d6! *(D)*



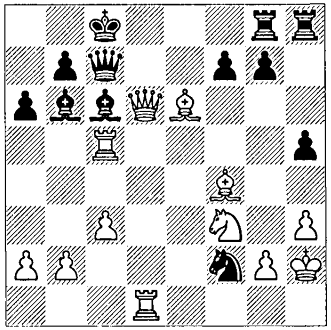
25 ... ♘xd1?!

This is the last interesting moment of the game. The obvious threat was ♖c5+ with mate, and Svidler convincingly shows that the text-move loses. Black had three other defences:

1) White's task is simple after 25...♗c6 26 ♗xe6+ fxe6 27 ♕xe6+ ♗d7 28 ♖xd7! ♕xd7 29 ♕xb6 ♘d3 30 ♖d5 ♕f7 31 ♖c5+! ♘xc5 32 ♕xc5+ ♔d8 33 ♗g5+, when Black loses his queen.

2) More attractive, but still straightforward, is 25...♗c7 26 ♖c5 ♗c6 27 ♖xc6 bxc6 (or 27...♕xd6 28 ♖dxd6 bxc6 29 ♖xc6 with a hopeless position for Black) 28 ♕xc6 ♘xd1 29 ♗a4! ♔b8 (29...e5 30 ♕a8+ ♗b8 31 ♕xa6+ ♔c7 32 ♕c6#) 30 ♕b6+ ♔c8 31 ♕xa6+ ♔b8 32 ♘e5, when Black can stave off mate only for a few moves; e.g., 32...♗d6 (32...♕d6 33 ♗c6) 33 ♗c6 ♕e7 34 ♕a8+ ♔c7 35 ♕b7+ ♔d8 36 ♗d7!. This line could also have occurred later in the game, had Black played 28...♗c7.

3) 25...♕c7!? was the best practical chance. Then 26 ♖c5! is a pretty geometrical motif, when Black has only 26...♗c6 (26...♕xc5 27 ♕b8#) 27 ♗xe6+ *(D)* (27 ♖xc6?! bxc6 28 ♗xe6+ ♔b7! doesn't allow White to transpose into the main line; after 29 ♕b4 a5 the outcome is unclear), and now:



3a) White must be accurate even after the seemingly impossible 27...fxe6:

3a1) 28 ♕xe6+?! ♔b8 29 ♗xc7+ ♗xc7+ 30 ♔g1 (not 30 g3?, when 30...♖e8 turns the tables) 30...♘xd1:

3a11) 31 ♘d4 ♗b6 32 ♖xc6 (32 ♕d6+ ♔a7 33 ♘xc6+ bxc6 34 ♕d7+ ♔b8! is only a draw, as 35 ♕xc6? ♖h6 gives Black a crucial defensive tempo) 32...bxc6 (32...♗xd4+ 33 cxd4 bxc6 34 ♕xc6 is worse, as Black will lose the knight) 33 ♕b3 (33 ♕xc6? ♖h6) 33...♔a7 34 ♕xd1 ♖d8 gives Black counterplay; after the exchange of the minor pieces his drawing chances are realistic.

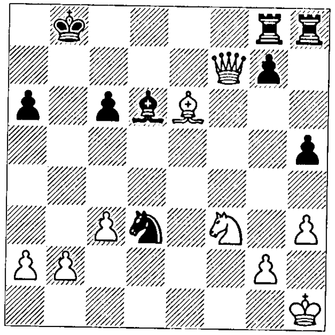
3a12) 31 ♖xc6 bxc6 32 ♕b3+ (32 ♘d4 ♗b6! transposes to line '3a11') 32...♔a7 33 ♕xd1 definitely gives Black more problems than in line '3a11', but after 33...♗b6+ 34 ♔h1 ♖d8 the outcome remains open.

3a2) However, the subtle 28 ♖xc6! bxc6 29 ♕xe6+ ♔b8 (29...♔b7? 30 ♖d7) 30 ♖d4! avoids transposition to any of the lines above and White wins.

3b) 27...♔b8 is somewhat better:

3b1) 28 ♕d4?! ♘xd1 29 ♗xc7+ ♗xc7+ 30 ♔g1 (after 30 ♘e5? ♖d8 31 ♗d5 ♖he8 the pins decide) 30...♖d8 31 ♗d5 ♘xb2! (Black's king is too exposed after 31...♗b6? 32 ♕c5+ ♔a8 33 ♗xc6 bxc6 34 ♘d4) and again it's not easy to break the pin on the d-file, as after 32 ♖xc6?! bxc6 33 ♕b4+ ♔a7 the c6-pawn is taboo.

3b2) The right way is again 28 ♖xc6! bxc6 (after 28...♕xd6 29 ♖cxd6 ♗c7 30 ♖e1 fxe6 31 ♔g3 the black knight is trapped) 29 ♕b4 ♕xf4+ (forced; the threat was ♕xb6+ and after king moves ♖d7 decides immediately) 30 ♕xf4+ ♗c7 31 ♖d6! (31 ♘e5 ♘xd1 32 ♗d7 f6 needlessly complicates White's task) 31...♘d3 (31...fxe6? 32 ♔g1) 32 ♕xf7 (a funny line is 32 ♕d4? ♖d8 33 ♕xd3 ♖xd6 34 ♕xa6 c5!, when the queen cannot escape a discovered check) 32...♗xd6+ 33 ♔h1 *(D)*.



Black's king is exposed, all his pawns are weak and his piece coordination is bad. White is practically winning.

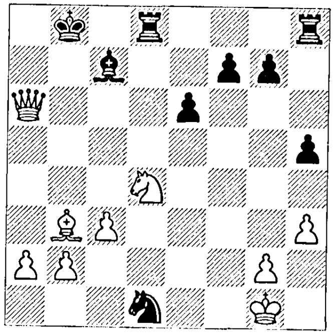
26 ♖c5+ ♗c6
27 ♖xc6+ bxc6
28 ♕xc6+ ♕c7

Making such a move brings little pleasure, but it actually prolongs the game. 28...♗c7 transposes to note '2' to Black's 25th move, which is winning for White.

29 ♗xc7 ♗xc7+
30 ♔g1 ♖d8

30...♘xb2 31 ♘e5 doesn't help Black, as his rooks stay sidelined and can't stop the mating attack.

31 ♕xa6+ ♔b8
32 ♘d4 *(D)*



Material is approximately equal, but not for long, as White's attack will net him extra dividends. The rest of the game requires little comment; Black could already have thrown in the towel.

32 ... ♖d6

32...♗d6 33 ♘c6+ ♔c7 34 ♕a7+ ♔xc6 35 ♗a4+ ♔d5 36 ♕d4#.

33 ♘c6+ ♖xc6
34 ♕xc6 ♖d8
35 ♗c2 ♖d6
36 ♕e8+ ♖d8

If Black wanted to play on, 36...♗d8 was the only move not losing on the spot.

37 ♕b5+ ♔c8
38 ♕a6+ 1-0

After 38...♔b8, 39 ♗e4 wraps it up.

Summary

This brisk attacking game with opposite-side castling shows why in positions of this type the king feels uncomfortable on the queenside. Without a pawn on the c-file, danger looms not only on the c-file, but also especially on the h2-b8 diagonal, the full control of which was the main theme of Svidler's attack (22 ♗f4! and 25 ♕d6!). As Black never had any really effective counterplay against White's king, the game was fairly one-sided, especially its final phase with the repeated geometrical motifs. In practice it's rarely like this, so the interesting question is what went wrong.

Firstly, time is a crucial factor with kings on opposite flanks. 13...h5?!, although it fits into Black's plans, ignores development. These positions differ from most sharp Sicilian lines in that here the main attacking instruments are pieces, not pawns, and so they must be activated. Svidler made the most of White's resources, while Black was simply so preoccupied with White's threats that his possible motifs (play on the a8-h1 and b8-h2 diagonals in connection with ...♘g4) never materialized. The notes also pinpoint the main culprit – 18...♖dg8?. A successful attack requires central control, which White's play illustrates in a model way. On the other hand, the black rooks never again took an active part in the proceedings. Nimzowitsch's slogan "centralize and don't despair" here works both strategically and tactically, as after 18...♖de8!? the outcome of the game would have remained open.

Game 22

Eugenio Torre – Vasily Ivanchuk

Olympiad, Erevan 1996

Sicilian Defence, 2 c3 [B22]

1 e4 c5
2 c3 ♘f6
3 e5 ♘d5
4 ♘f3 ♘c6
5 ♗c4

This is a relatively recent try. By the mid-1990s, the former main line 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♗c4 ♘b6 7 ♗b3 d5 8 exd6 ♕xd6 9 0-0 had exhausted its surprise potential and as Black was doing well in the critical positions, 2 c3 devotees tried to come up with something fresh.

5 ... ♘b6
6 ♗b3

6 ♗e2 doesn't cause Black any problems, as 6...d6 7 exd6 e5! 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 e4 10 ♘g5 ♗xd6 11 ♘xe4 ♗b4+ gives him full equality.

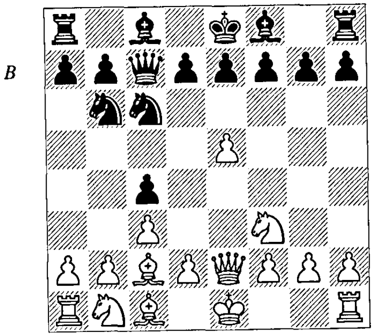
6 ... c4!?

The most principled continuation. Although the pawn becomes vulnerable, the same can also be said about the e5-pawn. After 6...d5 7 exd6 ♕xd6 White doesn't have to play 8 d4 (when 8...cxd4 transposes to the line mentioned in the note to White's 5th move), as 8 ♘a3!? is more interesting and promising.

7 ♗c2 ♕c7

At the time our game was played, this idea was still relatively untested. A logical alternative to the text-move is 7...d6 8 exd6 ♕xd6 9 0-0 ♗g4, when after 10 h3 ♗h5 11 ♕e2 e6 12 ♘a3 ♕f4 13 b3 cxb3 14 axb3 ♗d6 15 ♖e1 ♗xf3 16 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 17 gxf3 0-0 18 d4 ♘d5 19 ♘b5 ♗f4 20 ♗e4 ♗xc1 21 ♖axc1 ♖ad8 Black had nothing to fear in Rozentalis-Greenfeld, Israeli Cht 1999.

8 ♕e2 *(D)*



8 ... g5!

Only this justifies Black's previous move – he wants to take the e5-pawn, not exchange it. 8...g6?! is not good in view of 9 ♘a3, while after 8...e6 9 b3 g5!? 10 h3! ♗g7 11 bxc4 ♘xe5 12 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 13 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 14 d4 White is better.

9 ♘xg5

Now 9 h3 ♗g7 10 0-0 ♘xe5 11 ♘xg5 d5 is sound for Black, while the only other continuation deserving attention doesn't promise too much either: 9 e6!? dxe6 10 ♘xg5 ♕e5 11 ♘e4

(11 d4 cxd3 12 ♗xd3 ♕xe2+ 13 ♗xe2 h6 14 ♘e4 e5 is also OK for Black) 11...f5 12 ♘g3 ♕xe2+ 13 ♘xe2 ♗g7 14 ♘a3 0-0 15 0-0 ♗d7 was fully satisfactory for Black in Sveshnikov-Sakaev, St Petersburg Chigorin mem 1997. White should now have played 16 d3 with approximate equality. Compared with the game, Black's pawn-structure is less compact, but even the doubled e-pawns effectively control the central squares.

9 ... ♕xe5
10 d4

The pawn is poisoned, as after 10 ♕xe5?! ♘xe5 11 ♘xh7? ♗h6 there is no defence against ...♘d3. Since White can't avoid the exchange of queens, Black has solved his opening problems and has a pleasant position thanks to his potentially strong centre.

10 ... cxd3

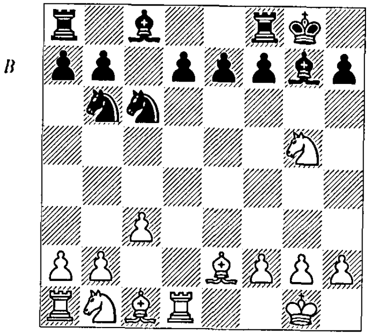
Logical; weaker is 10...♕xe2+?! 11 ♔xe2 h6 12 ♘f3 ♗g7 13 ♘a3, when White is somewhat better.

11 ♗xd3 ♕xe2+
12 ♗xe2

12 ♔xe2 h6 13 ♘f3 d5 is not ideal for White. His king might start feeling uncomfortable, as there are still a lot of pieces on the board.

12 ... ♗g7
13 0-0 0-0
14 ♖d1 *(D)*

14 ♘a3 d5 15 ♘b5 ♗f5 16 ♘f3 a6 17 ♘bd4 ♘xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♗g6 doesn't change the character of the position.



14 ... d5

14...h6?! 15 ♘h3! d5 16 ♘f4, when the knight aims for h5, quite understandably didn't attract Ivanchuk. Now the opening is more or less over and a complicated queenless middlegame starts. White must try to keep Black's centre under pressure and neutralize his initiative by timely exchanges. For Black it's not so easy to keep the tension; his edge is small and doesn't have a lasting character.

15 ♗e3 ♖d8

Ivanchuk's move seems better than the alternative 15...h6 16 ♘f3 ♖d8 17 ♘a3 (17 ♘bd2? ♘a4) 17...♘a4 18 ♖d2 a6 (after 18...♘xc3 19 bxc3 ♗xc3 20 ♖ad1 the h6-pawn is *en prise* and only White can be better) 19 ♗d1! (after 19 ♖ad1 ♗f5 the a4-knight seriously cramps White) 19...b5 20 ♗b3 e6 21 ♖ad1 ♖b8 (the alternative 21...♗f8?! is weaker in view of 22 ♗xa4 bxa4 23 ♘c4) with a complicated position. Although White is tied down to the defence of b2, the c8-bishop is hemmed in and the play remains balanced.

16 ♗h5!

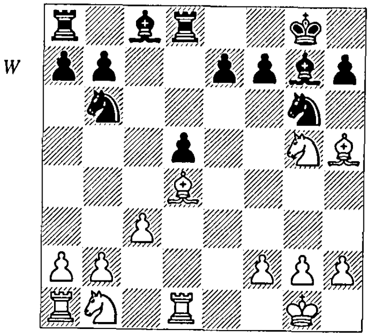
This strong move disrupts Black's plans. 16 ♘a3 allows 16...♘a4 17 ♖d2 ♘xc3!? 18 bxc3 (18 ♗h5 ♘e4 19 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 favours Black) 18...♗xc3. Here the h-pawn is not attacked and the extra tempo enables Black to get his pawns moving.

16 ... ♘e5

16...f6? 17 ♘f7 ♖d7 18 ♘h6+ gives White the bishops and the advantage.

17 ♗d4 ♘g6! *(D)*

This keeps more play in the position than 17...h6 18 ♘f3, with equality.



18 ♘a3?!

More logical is 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 g3 f6 20 ♘e4 (20 ♘f3 is weaker due to 20...♔h6!) with a similar situation to later in the game; Black's edge is only minimal.

18 ... ♗xd4?!

Ivanchuk returns the favour. After 18...e5?!, 19 ♗xb6 axb6 20 ♘c4 ♖a6 21 ♘e3 ♗f6 22 ♘f3 puts Black's centre under strong pressure, but the better 18...f6! 19 ♗xg6 (after 19 ♘h3 ♗xh3 20 gxh3 f5!? White's split pawns are an ugly sight) 19...hxg6 20 ♘f3 ♗g4 21 ♘b5 ♖d7! (with the idea 22 ♘xa7 ♘a4) gives Black an ideal position with a compact pawn-centre and an active bishop-pair.

19 ♖xd4

19 cxd4?! is considerably worse in view of 19...f6 20 ♗xg6 hxg6 21 ♘f3 ♗g4 followed by ...♖ac8.

19 ... f6

20 ♘e4!

This is best. 20 ♘f3? loses to 20...e5 and ...♘f4, while 20 ♗xg6 hxg6 gives Black an ideal pawn-structure.

20 ... e5

Not 20...♘f4? 21 ♘xf6+.

21 ♖d2 ♘f4!?

22 ♗d1

White decides to trust his opponent. After 22 ♘xf6+ ♔g7 23 ♘e8+ ♔h6 (not 23...♔f8? 24 ♘c7 ♘xh5 25 ♘xa8 ♘xa8 26 ♖e1, when Black loses the e-pawn directly) 24 ♘c7 (after 24 ♗f7 ♗f5 White's pieces are in a tangle) 24...♔xh5 (24...♖b8 25 ♗f3! e4 26 ♗d1 a6 27 ♖d4 ♗f5 28 ♘c2 ♖bc8 29 ♘e3 ♗g6 30 g3 enables the cheeky knight to survive) 25 ♘xa8 ♘xa8 26 ♖e1 ♖e8! (26...♘g6? 27 ♘c4 is good for White) 27 ♘b5 e4 28 g3 (28 ♘xa7 ♗d7 arrests the knight) 28...♘h3+ (28...♘d3? 29 ♖xd3 exd3 30 ♖xe8 d2 31 ♖e5+) 29 ♔g2 ♗e6 30 ♘d4 ♗g4 Black manages to retain his central pawns.

22 ... ♔f7

23 ♘c5 ♔e7

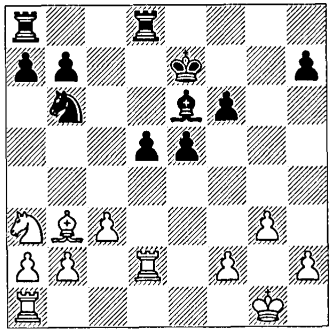
24 g3 ♘e6

25 ♘xe6 ♗xe6

26 ♗b3 *(D)*

After mutual inaccuracies the position has stabilized again. Another pair of minor pieces has been exchanged and if White gets time for, e.g., ♖ad1 and ♘c2, he might even get ambitious with f4. Ivanchuk feels his initiative slipping away and realizes he should change the character of the position.

B



26 ... ♘c4!

This is the only way to continue the fight; the point of this operation is seen in Black's 28th move.

27 ♗xc4

Weaker is 27 ♘xc4?! dxc4 28 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♗c2 ♖d2 30 ♗xh7 f5 (30...♖xb2 is less convincing in view of 31 ♖b1) 31 b3 ♔f6, when Black wins back the pawn with good winning chances due to his active rook.

27 ... dxc4

28 ♖ad1 ♖d3!

28...♖xd2 29 ♖xd2, followed by ♘c2, leads to a sterile position.

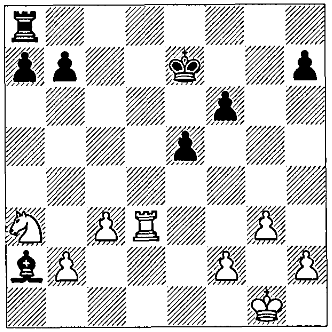
29 ♖xd3

Black's idea works tactically as 29 ♘xc4? loses an exchange to 29...♖xd2 30 ♘xd2 ♖d8 31 f3 ♗f5.

29 ... cxd3

30 ♖xd3 ♗xa2 *(D)*

W



Again the time has come to take stock of the position. Asymmetry and open diagonals favour the side with the bishop; this was the main reason for 28...♖d3!. However, against precise defence Black's edge shouldn't suffice.

31 ♘c2 ♔e6

31...♗b1 32 ♖d2 ♗xc2 is premature, since Black has no realistic winning chances in the rook endgame after 33 ♖xc2 ♖d8 34 ♔f1 ♖d1+ 35 ♔e2 ♖b1 36 ♖d2.

32 ♖d2

White wants to centralize his king and so prepares ♔f1. However, 32 ♘e3 ♗b1 33 ♖d2 ♗e4 34 f4!?, followed by ♔f2, makes a better impression, as it's then hard to see how Black can improve his position.

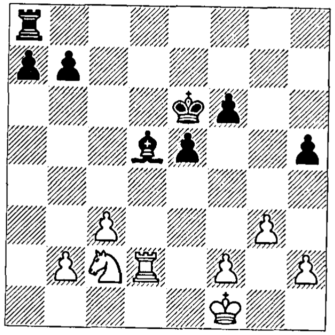
32 ... ♗d5

33 ♔f1

33 ♘e3 ♗f3 is unpleasant for White, but he could have achieved the aforementioned defensive formation with 33 f4! exf4 34 gxf4 ♖g8+ 35 ♔f1 (35 ♔f2? ♖g2+ 36 ♔e3 ♖xd2 37 ♔xd2 ♔f5 enables Black to activate his king, since the pawn endgame after 38 ♘e3+ ♔e4 39 ♘xd5 ♔xd5 40 ♔d3 a5! is lost for White) and White's next move will be ♘e3, because 35...♖g4? loses to 36 f5+! and ♖xd5+.

33 ... h5 *(D)*

W



34 h4?

This is a direct mistake, as it gives Black a target. 34 f4 ♗e4 35 ♘e3 was possible, when a draw would still be the most likely result.

34 ... ♖g8!

Black stops f4 and shows that White's last move has only weakened his position.

35 ♔e2 f5

36 ♘e3 ♗c6

37 c4?!

37 ♘c2 is passive; then 37...a5 with ideas like ...b5 and ...♖g4-a4-a2 is definitely unpleasant for White, as Black's hands are then freed to improve his position. If White tries 37 ♘c4 ♗b5 38 b3 ♗xc4+ (38...♖g4 is insufficient due to 39 ♖d6+ ♔e7 40 ♖h6) 39 bxc4 b6 40 ♖a2 ♖g7 41 c5, the rook endgame is still difficult after 41...bxc5 42 ♔d3 ♖g4! 43 ♖xa7 (43 c4? loses to 43...♖d4+ 44 ♔c3 e4 45 ♖xa7 ♖d3+ and ...♖f3) 43...c4+ (43...f4? 44 f3! ♖xg3 45 ♔c4 leads Black nowhere) 44 ♔d2 f4.

However, this was the very last chance to play the strategically desirable 37 f4! with the tactical idea 37...♖xg3 38 ♖d6+! ♔xd6 39 ♘xf5+ ♔e6 40 ♘xg3 exf4 41 ♘xh5 ♔e5 (41...♔f5 42 ♘g7+ ♔g4 43 h5 f3+ 44 ♔f2 ♔g5 45 ♘e6+ ♔xh5 46 ♔g3 draws) 42 ♔f2, when although White's knight is in danger, Black has no way to win it.

37 ... f4

38 gxf4

After 38 ♘f1 fxg3 39 fxg3 (39 ♘xg3 ♖g4) 39...♖f8 the passive knight is helpless against the powerful bishop.

38 ... exf4

39 ♘c2

After the seemingly active 39 ♘d5? ♖g4 40 ♔f3 ♖xh4 41 ♖d4 ♔f5 Black wins with ease.

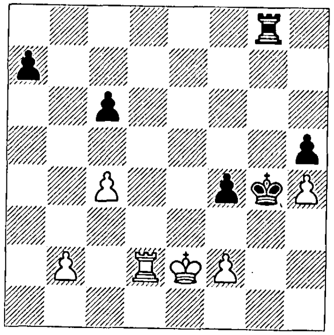
39 ... ♔f5!

After 39...♔e5 40 ♘d4 ♗e4 41 ♘f3+ the knight will shut the g-file, while 39...♖g4 40 ♘d4+ ♔e5 (40...♔e7 41 ♘xc6+ bxc6 42 c5 is no better) 41 ♘xc6+ bxc6 42 ♖d7 gives White too much counterplay. Therefore Black's king must go for the weak h-pawn.

40 ♘d4+ ♔g4

41 ♘xc6 bxc6 *(D)*

W



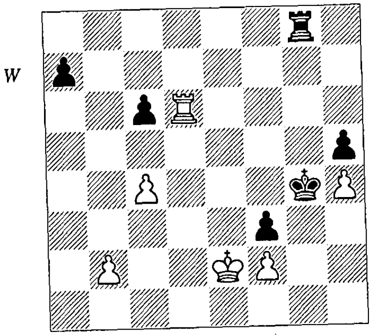
After the last transformation, arguably the most interesting part of the game now begins. Although rook endgames are known for their drawish tendencies, here White's task is difficult – he will shortly lose material and his pieces are passive and his pawns more vulnerable than their black counterparts.

42 ♖d6

White's only hope is active counterplay. After 42 f3+?, 42...♔xh4 43 ♔f2 ♔h3 robs the white king of the f3-square and promises White no relief. The main threat is ...♖b8 and passive continuations like 42 ♔f1 ♖b8 43 ♔g2 f3+ 44 ♔h2 c5! are hopeless for White; Black will cash in his advantage only after he improves his position.

42 ... f3+ *(D)*

Although this committal move fixes the f2-pawn, Black's own pawn will become potentially weak as well. 42...♖b8 is insufficient, as after 43 ♖g6+ ♔xh4 44 ♖xc6 (44 ♔f3!? is similar) 44...♔g4 (44...♖xb2+ 45 ♔f3 draws) 45 ♖g6+ ♔f5 46 ♖a6 ♖xb2+ 47 ♔f3 White activates both his pieces. Black also has to bear in mind that the ending rook and f- and h-pawns vs a rook is only exceptionally won; the theoretical verdict in a standard situation is a draw. The *zwischenzug* 42...♖e8+!? is interesting; after 43 ♔d3 (43 ♔f1 ♖b8 leaves White in trouble) 43...♖b8!? (or 43...♔f3) the king can support the passed f-pawn, but Black's win still remains in doubt.



43 ♔d3!

White rightly seeks activity. The passive 43 ♔f1 makes it easier for Black:

1) 43...♖b8? and now:

1a) 44 ♖xc6 ♖xb2 45 ♔e1 ♖e2+ (45...♖b1+ 46 ♔d2 ♖f1? 47 ♖g6+ ♔xh4 48 ♔e3 draws; we will see the significance of this line below) 46 ♔f1 a5 47 ♖a6 ♖e5! 48 ♖g6+ ♔xh4 wins for Black, as White's king is trapped and he can free his own king by ...♖g5.

1b) 44 ♖d4+! ♔h3 45 ♖d3 ♖xb2 46 ♖xf3+ ♔xh4 47 ♖f6 is only a draw.

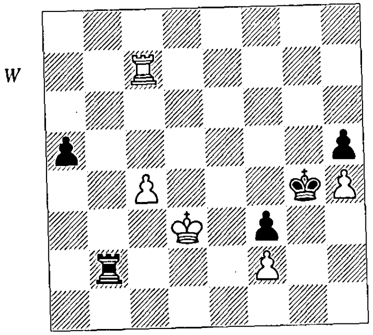
2) 43...c5! 44 ♖d5 (44 ♖e6 ♖d8! drives the white king further from the kingside) 44...♖b8 45 ♖xc5 (45 ♖g5+ ♔xh4 46 ♖g3 ♖b3! is hopeless for White; Black will take on b2 only after playing ...a5-a4) 45...♖xb2 46 ♔e1 ♖b1+ 47 ♔d2 ♖f1. With the rook on c5, the check on the g-file is ineffective and after 48 ♔e3 ♖e1+ 49 ♔d3 ♖e2 Black wins easily.

43 ... c5
44 ♖d5 ♖b8
45 ♖xc5

After 45 ♔c3 ♖e8! 46 ♖xc5 (46 ♖g5+ ♔xh4 47 ♖g3 ♖e3+!) 46...♖e2 47 ♖c7 ♖xf2 48 ♖xa7 ♖e2 Black's single pawn is stronger than both of White's; after 49 ♔d3 ♖xb2 50 ♖g7+ ♔xh4 51 ♔e3 f2 52 ♖f7 ♔g3 the king will hide on f1.

45 ... ♖xb2
46 ♖c7 a5! *(D)*

Black does his best to maintain the tension. 46...♖xf2? 47 ♖g7+ ♔xh4 48 ♔e3 ♖f1 49 ♖xa7 throws away any possible winning chances.



47 ♖g7+!

This check sidelines Black's king for the time being. 47 ♖a7 ♖xf2 48 ♖g7+ (after 48 ♖xa5 ♖e2 White's king is cut off) 48...♔xh4 49 ♔e3 ♖c2 50 ♔xf3 ♖c3+! 51 ♔g2 ♖xc4 results in a theoretically won endgame, since Black's rook is active and can protect both pawns

sideways from the fourth or fifth rank. After 47 c5 ♖xf2 48 c6 ♖e2 49 ♖g7+ (49 ♖d7 ♖e8 50 c7 f2 51 ♖f7 ♔g3) 49...♔xh4 50 c7 ♖e8 51 ♖f7 (after 51 ♖e7 f2 52 ♖xe8 f1♕+ 53 ♔d4 ♕f2+! White loses the c-pawn) 51...♔g3 52 ♖g7+ ♔h3! (52...♔h2? 53 ♖e7! leaves Black's king misplaced; Black even loses after 53...f2? 54 ♖xe8 f1♕+ 55 ♖e2+) 53 ♖f7 ♔g2 54 ♖g7+ ♔f1 55 ♖e7 ♖c8 56 ♔e3 f2 57 ♖f7 ♖e8+ Black also wins.

47 ... ♔xh4
48 ♔e3!?

White does well to refrain from the tempting 48 ♖a7 (48 ♖f7? a4), when Black wins, albeit in a study-like manner:

1) 48...♖xf2 49 ♔e3 ♖f1 50 ♖xa5 (after 50 c5? ♖c1 51 ♖xa5 ♔g3 White has no defence against ...♖e1+ and ...f2) 50...♔g4 51 ♖a8 ♖e1+ 52 ♔f2 ♖e2+ 53 ♔f1 is insufficient for Black, as his king has no cover against checks from behind.

2) 48...♔g4 and now:

2a) 49 ♖xa5? ♖xf2 50 ♖a8 ♖e2 51 ♖g8+ ♔f4 52 ♖f8+ (or 52 c5 ♖e3+ 53 ♔d4 ♖e7) 52...♔g3 53 ♖g8+ ♔f2 54 ♖h8 ♖e5 (premature is 54...♔e1? 55 ♖xh5 f2 56 ♖h1+ f1♕ 57 ♖xf1+ ♔xf1 58 c5) 55 ♔d4 ♖g5 56 c5 ♔g2 57 c6 f2 58 c7 f1♕ 59 c8♕ ♕f4+ with a successful king-hunt.

2b) 49 ♖g7+!? ♔f5 50 ♖a7 h4 (50...♖xf2 51 ♔e3 draws as in line '1') 51 ♔e3 is a different matter, as after 51...♖b3+ 52 ♔d4 h3 53 ♖xa5+ ♔g4 54 ♖a8 Black can't win.

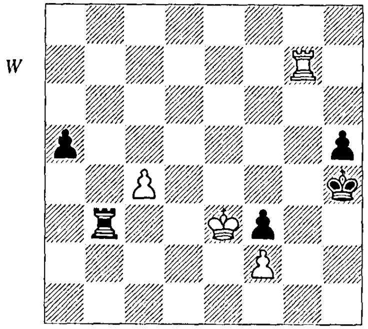
3) 48...a4 is a tricky attempt:

3a) 49 ♖xa4? ♖xf2 50 c5+ (50 ♖a8 ♖e2) 50...♔g3 51 c6 ♖e2 52 ♖a8 ♖e7 53 ♖g8+ ♔f2 54 ♖h8 ♖c7 55 ♖h6 h4 wins for Black. If White's king goes to help his c-pawn, Black's pawns will already be far enough advanced for him to sacrifice his rook on c6.

3b) However, 49 c5! ♖xf2 (49...a3 50 c6) 50 ♔e3 ♖f1 51 c6 ♔g3 52 ♖g7+ ♔h3 53 ♖a7 is only a draw, as Black can't retain both his a- and f-pawns.

4) The only move is 48...♔h3!; after 49 ♖xa5 h4 50 ♖g5 (50 ♔e3 loses to 50...♖b3+ and ...♔g2; Black also wins after 50 c5 ♖xf2 51 c6 ♖e2) 50...♖xf2 51 ♔e3 ♖g2 (not 51...♖f1? 52 c5) 52 ♖f5 ♖g3! 53 c5 (after 53 ♖xf3 ♔g4 54 ♖xg3+ hxg3 55 c5 ♔h3 Black queens with check, while 53 ♔f2 also loses, to 53...♔g4 followed by ...♖g2+ and ...h3-h2) 53...♔g2 54 c6 ♖g7 55 c7 ♖e7+ Black wins.

48 ... ♖b3+ *(D)*



49 ♔f4?

This costs White the game, as now Black keeps the c-pawn easily under control and the a-pawn will divert White's rook to free the trapped king. White had to play 49 ♔d4 a4:

1) 50 ♖a7? ♔h3 51 c5 (51 ♖xa4 ♔g2 is similar) 51...♔g2 52 c6 ♖b8 53 ♖xa4 ♔xf2 leaves White in trouble.

2) 50 c5! a3 51 c6 is stronger, when there is no win in sight for Black:

2a) 51...a2 52 ♖a7 ♖b2 53 ♔e3 is just a draw.

2b) The same goes for 51...♖b2 52 ♖a7!? ♖xf2 (after 52...♔h3, 53 ♖xa3 threatens c7 and Black has no time for ...♔g2) 53 ♔e3.

2c) A more testing try is 51...♖b8!? 52 ♖a7 ♔h3 53 ♖xa3 ♔g2, but White has a clear-cut draw after 54 ♔e3 (54 ♖a7? h4 55 ♖g7+ ♔xf2 56 ♖h7 ♔e1! indirectly protects the h-pawn and prepares ...f2) 54...♖e8+ (54...h4 55 ♖a4 is the same, since after 55...♖b3+ 56 ♔d2 Black must respect the c-pawn) 55 ♔f4 ♖f8+ (55...♖c8 56 ♖c3 h4 57 c7 h3 58 ♖xf3 h2 59 ♖g3+) 56 ♔e3 (56 ♔g5? loses to 56...♔xf2 57 ♔xh5 ♔g2 58 ♔g4 ♖g8+) 56...h4 57 ♖a4! ♖e8+ 58 ♖e4 ♖xe4+ 59 ♔xe4 h3 60 c7 h2 61 c8♕ h1♕ 62 ♕g8+ ♔xf2 63 ♕a2+ with a perpetual check.

49 ... a4
50 ♖g1

This only chases the king to a better square, but after 50 ♖a7 a3 51 c5 ♔h3 52 c6 ♔g2 53 c7 ♖c3 54 ♔e5!? (54 ♖xa3 ♖xc7 55 ♖xf3 ♖f7+)

54...h4! 55 ♔d6 h3 56 ♖a8 (56 ♖xa3 also loses, to 56...♖xc7 57 ♔xc7 h2) 56...h2 57 ♖g8+ ♔xf2 58 ♖h8 ♔g3 59 ♖g8+ ♔f4 one of Black's pawns queens.

50 ... ♔h3

51 c5

51 ♖g5 a3 52 ♖xh5+ ♔g2 is also hopeless for White.

51 ... a3

52 ♖c1

52 ♖a1 loses to 52...♔g2, while 52 c6 a2 53 c7 ♖c3 54 ♖a1 ♔g2 transposes to the game.

52 ... a2

53 ♖a1 ♖a3

54 c6 ♔g2

55 c7 ♖c3

56 ♖xa2 h4!

Energetic, but 56...♖xc7 57 ♔g5 (57 ♖a8 ♖g7) 57...♖c5+ 58 ♔h4 ♖e5 wins too.

57 ♖a8 ♖xc7

0-1

Summary

A flank attack against White's central outpost in keeping with hypermodern strategy (8...g5!) enabled Black to control and occupy the most important part of the board himself. He also managed to exchange queens; otherwise his king might have had problems finding a safe haven. White understood that his strategy for fighting a mobile pawn-centre should be disruptive flank actions (16 ♗h5!) and especially suitable exchanges. In this respect the 18th move was instructive, as both players sinned against their main aims: White by rejecting the natural 18 ♗xg7, while Black didn't use the opportunity to avoid the exchange by 18...f6!, retaining his bishop-pair at the same time. On the other hand, Ivanchuk's simplifying operation started by 26...♘c4! was the best way to keep the game going. His edge after 30...♗xa2 consisted not only of the better minor piece, but his pawns were also potentially more mobile (...f5-f4, ...b5, ...a5, etc.).

The endgame provides a good example of how to increase a minimal advantage. This commonly used term is in itself somewhat contradictory: if it's so small it can't be realized, then formal logic should mean the advantage is non-existent. However, practical players know how difficult it is to defend without an active plan, and Torre's play from move 31 to 37 was unconvincing. However, despite all the progress Black had made, the outcome even in the clearly better rook endgame remained open. White, when faced with concrete danger, played well until the fatal 49 ♔f4?, a move that didn't sufficiently support White's main source of counterplay – the passed c-pawn.

Game 23

Sergei Tiviakov – Evgeny Vasiukov

Russian Championship, Elista 1996

Ruy Lopez (Spanish) [C65]

1 e4 e5

2 ♘f3 ♘c6

3 ♗b5 ♘f6

4 ♕e2

Tiviakov often plays this rare move (also after 3...a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6) and has remained faithful to his pet system even after this game.

4 ... ♗e7

A playable, but rather passive continuation. If Black doesn't want to aim for better charted lines with 4...a6 5 ♗a4, a more active alternative is 4...♗c5!? 5 c3 (accepting the pawn sacrifice is risky; after 5 ♗xc6 bxc6 6 ♘xe5?! ♕e7 7 ♘d3 ♗a6 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 b3 ♖fe8 10 f3 ♘d5! 11 ♘xd5 cxd5 12 ♗b2 dxe4 13 fxe4 ♕xe4 14 ♕xe4 ♖xe4+ 15 ♔d1 ♗f8 16 ♖e1 ♖ae8 Black was much better in J.Polgar-Smejkal, Moscow OL 1994) 5...0-0 6 d3 ♖e8 7 0-0 a6 8 ♗a4 h6 9 h3 d5. Black has managed to play ...d5 in one move; in Kotsur-Dautov, Erevan OL 1996 this gave him comfortable equality after 10 ♘bd2 b5 11 ♗b3 ♗e6 12 ♖e1 ♗b6 13 ♘f1 d4 14 ♘g3 a5 15 ♗xe6 fxe6.

5 0-0

Theory considers 5 c3 to be more enterprising. Black then can't ignore the threat to his e5-pawn, and White occupies the centre and gains a space advantage after 5...d6 6 d4 ♗d7 7 d5!? ♘b8 8 ♗d3 c6 9 c4 ♘a6 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 h3 ♘c5 12 ♗c2 cxd5 13 cxd5 ♕c7 14 ♗d2 g6 15 b4 ♘a6 16 a3 ♘h5 17 g3 ♖ac8 18 ♗b3 ♔h8 19 0-0-0! b5 20 ♔b2. In Bronstein-Panno, Petropolis IZ 1973 White's queenside initiative was more real than Black's possible counterplay on the other side of the board.

5 ... d6

6 d4

Even here 6 c3 0-0 7 d4 was still possible, but White gives the game a different character, resembling the Steinitz Defence.

6 ... exd4

7 ♘xd4 ♗d7

8 ♗xc6

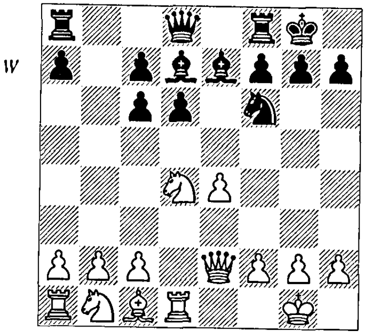
Exchanging the bishop saves time; after 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 ♗a4 0-0 10 ♘c3 ♖e8 11 ♗f4 ♗f8 12 ♖ad1 (Sideif-Zade – Romanishin, Tashkent 1980) 12...♕b8! Black is fine.

8 ... bxc6

9 ♖d1!?

White's usual plan is to play for the e5 break, but the immediate 9 e5 dxe5 10 ♕xe5 0-0 11 ♘f5 ♗b4!? gives Black good counterchances; his active bishops and lead in development compensate for his split pawns. Tiviakov's move is new; 9 ♘c3 0-0 10 b3 ♖e8 11 ♗b2 d5!? 12 e5 ♗f8 13 f4 c5 14 ♘f3 d4 15 ♘e4 ♘d5 16 ♗c1 ♖b8 17 ♖e1 ♖b6 18 ♗d2 ♕a8 19 ♘g3 ♖g6 20 ♕d3 a6 21 f5 ♖g4 22 a4 ♗c6 led to unclear and sharp play in Galdunts-G.Kuzmin, Moscow 1991.

9 ... 0-0 *(D)*



10 ♘c3

The first critical moment. 10 e5! would be a consistent follow-up to the previous move:

1) 10...dxe5 11 ♘xc6 ♕e8 12 ♘xe5 (12 ♘xe7+!? ♕xe7 13 b3 {or 13 ♗f4} also promises White chances for an advantage) 12...♗d6 13 ♖e1 (13 ♗f4? ♗g4 14 f3 ♘h5! is dangerous for White) 13...♗xe5 14 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 15 ♖xe5 ♖fe8 16 ♖xe8+ (16 ♗f4?! ♘d5 17 ♗g3 ♖xe5 18 ♗xe5 ♖e8 19 f4 f6 20 ♘c3 ♘xc3 21 ♗xc3 ♖e2 is only drawish) 16...♖xe8 17 ♗d2 ♖e2 (17...♗f5?! is weaker in view of 18 ♘a3 ♖e2 19 ♖d1) 18 f3. White's idea is to play a4 and ♔f1, and possibly ♖a3-c3; Black's activity should gradually evaporate.

2) 10...♘e8 is passive, and after 11 ♘c3 (11 e6 is premature as after 11...fxe6 12 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 13 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 play on the b- and f-files gives Black enough counterplay) White is better.

10 ... ♖e8

11 ♕d3 ♕b8!

By this typical manoeuvre, Black will activate his queen on the b-file and connect his rooks. White has missed the moment for direct action and Black's solid and flexible set-up enables him to hold the balance.

12 b3 ♕b4

Black shouldn't hurry with ...c5 yet. 12...♕b7 is also possible.

13 ♗b2 ♗f8

14 ♘de2 ♖ab8

15 ♘g3 ♗g4!?

16 f3 ♗c8

17 ♘ce2 ♘d7

18 ♕e3

The queen leaves the exposed square. Instead, 18 ♘f5?! ♘e5 followed by ...♗xf5 would suit Black.

18 ... ♕b6

19 ♗d4

White avoids exchanging queens. 19 ♕xb6 axb6 20 ♘d4 ♗b7 is approximately equal, as it's difficult for either side to find any effective active plan.

19 ... c5

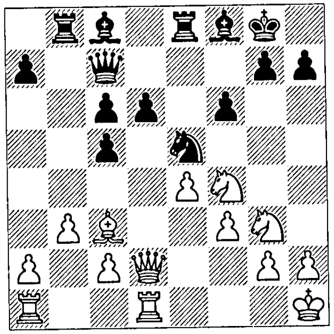
This is now forced, but Black will have time to cover the d5-square.

20 ♗c3 ♘e5

21 ♔h1 f6

Safety first, but even the more active continuation 21...g6!? (with the idea 22 ♘f4 ♗h6) was playable.

22 ♘f4 c6
23 ♕d2 ♕c7 *(D)*



24 ♘f5?!

The position has remained about equal, as both sides are keeping their opponent's activity well in check. Although Black has weakened his d6-pawn, it controls important central squares and is not really vulnerable. With the text-move, Tiviakov embarks on a risky and provocative strategy of luring Black out of his shell, but he had underestimated the dynamic potential of Black's army. 24 ♖e1 ♕f7 25 ♖ad1 would have maintained the tension.

24 ... d5

A natural reaction. Instead, 24...♗xf5? 25 exf5 and ♘e6 would justify White's play.

25 ♘g3 d4
26 ♗a5

26 ♗b2 ♘c4! gives Black a notable advantage.

26 ... ♕f7
27 c3

27 ♘d3 is weaker due to 27...c4.

27 ... ♖b5

The plan to break up Black's centre fails because of the exposed a5-bishop.

28 cxd4?

White makes another concession with the sole intention of complicating matters. This anti-positional move opens up the game for Black's bishop-pair. After 28 c4 ♖b7 29 ♕c2 g6 (or 29...♗d6) Black is slightly better, but the closed nature of the position gives White good defensive chances.

28 ... cxd4
29 a4

After 29 b4?!, 29...c5 threatens ...♘c4, while 29 ♕e1 c5 also gives Black a comfortable advantage.

29 ... ♖xb3
30 ♕xd4 ♘c4
31 ♗e1 ♘e3

Tempting, but as the exposed knight will have to retreat shortly, 31...c5!? 32 ♕d5 (32 ♕f2 ♖b2 is too passive for White) 32...♘e3 33 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 deserved attention. In the endgame the c-pawn can be potentially dangerous, just as the active bishops.

32 ♖dc1 c5
33 ♕d2 ♗a6
34 ♗f2

34 ♕a5 ♕b7 35 ♖c3 ♗d6! only exposes White's queen, but a better move was 34 ♖ab1!?, when White is close to full equality.

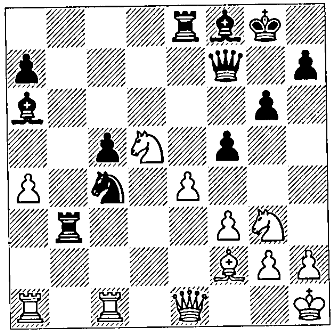
34 ... ♘c4
35 ♕e1 g6?!

Black needs to activate all his pieces to make any inroads. The text-move limits White's g3-knight and threatens ...♗h6, but also weakens f6 and Black's whole kingside. Less committal was 35...♗d6 36 ♘d5 ♘b2!, with an advantage.

36 ♘d5

36 ♖ab1 ♖a3 37 ♖a1 ♖xa1 38 ♖xa1 f5 exchanges the active rook, but the initiative stays in Black's hands.

36 ... f5 *(D)*



37 ♕f1?!

As now Black literally sets the board on fire, it's worth the effort to look at the alternatives:

1) 37 ♖ab1 ♖a3!? (after 37...♖xb1 38 ♖xb1, with the idea that 38...♗b7? is met by 39 ♖xb7, White has too much activity) helps Black, as now the a-pawn is *en prise* as well.

2) 37 ♕g1 ♗g7 (after 37...fxe4? 38 ♘xe4 ♗g7 39 ♘xc5 ♗xa1 40 ♖xa1 too many black pieces are hanging) 38 ♖ab1 (38 ♖a2 fxe4 39 fxe4 ♘d6! gives White a less attractive version of the 38...♗g7 bracket in line '3a') and now:

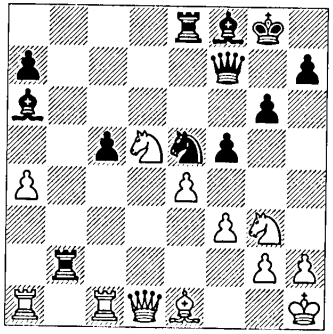
2a) 38...♖xb1 39 ♖xb1 fxe4 40 fxe4 ♘d2 (40...♘d6 41 ♗xc5 ♘xe4 42 ♘xe4 ♕xd5 43 ♘d6 is about equal) 41 ♖e1 ♗d3 (41...♗e5 42 ♗xc5 ♗xg3? 43 hxg3 ♘xe4 44 ♕d4! pinpoints Black's dark-square vulnerability) 42 ♗xc5 ♘xe4 43 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 (after 43...♗xe4? 44 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 45 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 46 ♕e3 Black loses an exchange) 44 ♘e7+ ♔h8 45 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 46 ♘c8 and, despite Black's initiative, a draw is the most likely result.

2b) 38...♘d2!? 39 ♖xb3 ♘xb3 is more refined. The knight heads also for d4 and Black keeps more pieces and tension on the board.

3) The most complicated lines arise after 37 ♕d1!?:

3a) 37...♖eb8 38 ♕g1 fxe4 (38...♗g7 39 ♖a2 fxe4 40 fxe4 is similar to the 38 ♖a2 bracket in line '2', but without the rook on e8 White is OK) 39 ♘xe4! (39 fxe4 is worse due to 39...♖c8!?) 39...♗g7 40 ♘xc5 ♗xa1 41 ♘xa6 (forced; the difference compared with the 37...fxe4? bracket in line '2' is that Black's b3-rook is protected) 41...♖d8 (41...♖c8? 42 ♕d1 ♖b7 43 ♘c5! ♖b2 44 ♘e4 is bad for Black) 42 ♘ab4 ♗e5 (42...a5?! 43 ♘e7+! ♕xe7 44 ♘c6 makes it simpler for White) 43 ♖xc4 (now 43 ♘e7+? ♔g7 44 ♘bc6 ♖d2 45 ♖xc4 loses to 45...♕xc4 46 ♘xe5 ♕e2) 43...a5 44 ♘e7+!? (after 44 ♗b6 ♖xb4 45 ♘xb4 ♕xc4 46 ♗xd8 axb4 the b-pawn is very dangerous) 44...♕xe7 45 ♘c6 ♕e6 (45...♕c7? 46 ♖c5 ♗d6 47 ♕d1! gives White a crucial tempo to activate his queen) 46 ♖c5 ♖d2 47 ♕e1! ♖xf2 48 ♖xe5 ♕xe5! (Black must bail out, as 48...♕xc6? 49 ♖e8+ ♕xe8 50 ♕xe8+ ♔g7 51 ♕e7+ ♔g8 52 ♕d8+ ♔f7 53 ♔g1! ♖bb2 54 ♕d5+ leads to a lost pawn endgame for Black) 49 ♘xe5 ♖fb2 50 ♘d3 ♖xd3 51 h4 ♖dd2 with a draw, as either White or Black will give a perpetual.

3b) Another sharp line is 37...♖b2 38 ♗e1 ♘e5!? *(D)* (38...♗g7 39 ♗c3 is about equal), and now:



3b1) 39 ♗c3 ♘d3 40 ♘f6+ (after 40 ♗xb2 ♘f2+ 41 ♔g1 ♘xd1 42 ♘f6+ ♔h8 43 ♖xd1 ♗g7 44 ♘xe8 ♗xb2 45 ♖d8 ♗d4+! 46 ♔h1 ♗xa1 47 ♘d6+ ♕g8 White's knights can't cope with the passed c-pawn; 40 ♖c2 ♖xc2 41 ♕xc2 ♘b4 is also better for Black) 40...♕xf6 41 ♗xf6 ♘f2+ 42 ♔g1 ♘xd1 43 ♖xd1 ♖b6 enables Black to retain an edge in the endgame.

3b2) 39 exf5! is more testing:

3b21) 39...gxf5 40 ♘h5! (after 40 ♘f4 ♗h6 41 ♗c3? ♗xf4 42 ♗xb2 ♘d3! 43 ♖c2 ♖e1+ 44 ♕xe1 ♘xe1 45 ♖xe1 ♕b3 White loses material; 40 ♗c3 ♘d3 is also good for Black, as 41 ♗xb2? ♘f2+ 42 ♔g1 ♘xd1 43 ♘f6+ ♕xf6! doesn't work for White) is very dangerous; e.g., 40...♗e2 41 ♘df6+ ♔h8 42 ♕d5 ♗f1 43 ♘f4! ♕xf6 44 ♗c3 and White regains the piece with a continuing attack.

3b22) A better try is 39...♘d3 40 ♘e4 ♗g7 41 f6 ♗f8 42 ♘e7+ ♗xe7 43 fxe7 ♖xe7 44 ♗h4 g5 (the more solid 44...♖d7 45 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 46 ♗xf6 ♘f2+ is drawish) 45 ♘xc5! (45 ♘xg5? ♕h5 and 45 ♗xg5? ♖xe4 are out of the question for White) 45...♖ee2 (45...♘xc5? loses to 46 ♖xc5 gxh4 47 ♖g5+ ♔f8 48 ♕d4) 46 ♘xa6 (46 ♘xd3 is weaker due to 46...♖bd2) 46...♖bd2 47 ♕xd2! ♖xd2 48 ♖c8+ ♔g7 49 ♖c7 gxh4, when Black's active pieces give him enough play for the pawn to hold the game.

3b23) 39...♖d8 is a natural attempt to exploit the pin: 40 ♘e4 ♗g7 (40...♔h8? 41 ♗c3! ♖xd5 42 ♗xb2 ♖xd1+ 43 ♖xd1 ♕xf5 44 ♖d5 is very good for White) 41 ♖xc5 ♗f1 (41...♘d3? 42 f6! ♗f8 43 ♖c7), and now:

3b231) 42 ♗d2 is interesting. Then Black can consider 42...♘d3!? with great complications; the tempting 42...♗xg2+ 43 ♔xg2 gxf5! 44 ♖b1 fxe4 45 ♖xb2 exf3+ 46 ♔f1 ♘d3 47 ♖cb5! ♘xb2 48 ♕b3 ♔h8 49 ♗c3 ♘xa4 (or

49...♕d7!? 50 ♗xg7+ ♕xg7 51 ♕xb2) 50 ♖b7 ♕xb7 51 ♕xb7 ♘xc3 52 ♕c7 ♖g8! 53 ♘xc3 ♗d4 54 ♘e2 seems to peter out in a draw.

3b232) 42 ♗f2 ♘d3 43 ♕xf1 (43 ♖c7? ♗xg2+ 44 ♔xg2 ♕xd5 gives Black a strong attack) 43...♘xc5 44 fxg6 (44 ♘e7+!?) 44...hxg6 leads to a position that is not easy to assess; it is probably about equal.

Most of these lines, especially those after 37 ♕d1!?, show that 35...g6?! gave White excellent tactical chances.

37 ... fxe4

Black avoids the tempting 37...♗g7. Then 38 ♖xc4? allows 38...fxe4! (after 38...♗xa1 39 ♕xa1 ♗xc4 40 ♘f6+ ♔f8 41 ♗xc5+ ♖e7 White can force a draw at once with 42 ♘d5 ♗xd5 43 ♕h8+ ♕g8 44 ♕f6+) 39 ♖d1 (39 fxe4 ♗xa1 40 ♕xa1 ♕xf2 is hopeless for White) 39...exf3, when White's position is falling apart, while 38 ♖ab1 loses an exchange to 38...♖xb1 39 ♖xb1 ♘d2. The modest 38 ♖a2! fxe4 39 fxe4 is best, when White has little to fear.

The text-move is more energetic than 37...f4 38 ♖xc4!? ♖b2 39 ♖ac1 fxg3 40 ♗xg3, when White has reasonable compensation.

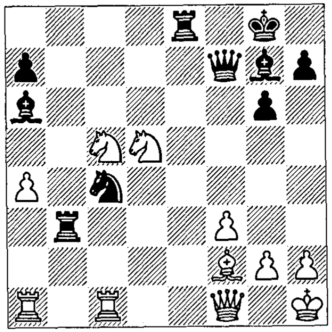
38 ♘xe4

Black has a tangible advantage after 38 fxe4 ♖b2, as even the tactical 39 ♗xc5!? ♕xf1+ 40 ♖xf1 ♗xc5 41 ♘c7 ♘d2 42 ♖fc1 ♘xe4! 43 ♘xe8 ♘f2+ 44 ♔g1 ♗d4 is insufficient for White.

38 ... ♗g7

39 ♘xc5 *(D)*

B



39 ... ♖xf3!!

The proverbial bolt from the blue, just when all the pins and attacks seemed to be working in White's favour. After 39...♗xa1 White can even play the ambitious 40 ♘xa6! (40 ♘xb3 ♗b2 41 ♖e1! ♖xe1 42 ♕xe1 ♕xd5 43 ♘c5 ♕c6 44 ♘xa6 ♕xa6 45 ♕e8+ leads to a perpetual) 40...♘d2 41 ♕d1, when the advantage passes to him: 41...♗e5 42 ♕xd2 ♖b2 43 ♕e3! ♕xd5 44 ♘c7 ♕d2 45 ♘xe8 ♕xf2 46 ♘f6+!.

40 gxf3

The only other viable move, 40 ♘xa6, is weaker because of 40...♘d2! (40...♖xf2 41 ♕xc4 ♗xa1 42 ♖xa1 ♖e4 43 ♕c8+ ♖e8 44 ♕c4 only gives Black a repetition) 41 ♕g1 (after 41 ♕b5 ♖xf2 42 ♖e1 ♖f8! Black threatens not only ...♗xa1, but also ...♖xg2!; White's queen is too far away to help) 41...♖xf2 42 ♖c7! ♗xa1! (42...♕xd5? allows White to equalize after 43 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 44 ♕xf2) 43 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 44 ♕xa1 (44 ♘ac7 ♗d4!) 44...♖e5!! 45 ♘f4 ♖xf4 46 ♕a2+ ♔g7 47 h3 ♖e2, when all Black's pieces are participating in the attack and he should win.

40 ... ♘e3

41 ♕h3

41 ♕xa6? ♕xf3+ mates and 41 ♘xe3? loses on the spot to 41...♗xf1 42 ♘xf1 ♕xf3+ 43 ♔g1 ♗xa1 44 ♖xa1 ♖e2. The tactical 41 ♘f6+ disrupts Black's attack for a while, but after 41...♕xf6! (41...♗xf6 42 ♕xa6 ♗xa1 43 ♕b7 forces an endgame or repetition after 43...♖e7 44 ♕a8+) 42 ♕h3 ♗e2! 43 ♖ab1 (43 ♖a3 ♗xf3+ 44 ♔g1 ♘f5! is no improvement for White) 43...♗xf3+ 44 ♔g1 ♘g4 White's king is in serious danger with Black's pieces swarming all around him. However, the other desperado check is stronger; 41 ♘e7+!? ♖xe7 42 ♕h3 ♗xa1 (after 42...♗e2 43 ♖ab1 White eyes Black's weakened back rank) 43 ♘xa6 ♗f6 leaves Black only slightly better; compared with the position after the 46th move White's pieces are more active.

41 ... ♗c8!

42 ♕g3

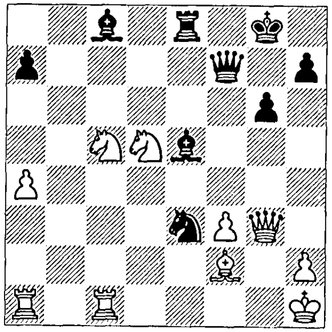
42 ♘e7+ loses to 42...♕xe7 43 ♕h4 ♕f8!, as White can't protect all the attacked points at once.

42 ... ♗e5 *(D)*

43 ♘e4!

This is clever, and also necessary, as 'normal' moves lose swiftly. After 43 f4 ♕xd5+ 44 ♔g1 ♗xf4! or 43 ♘f4 ♗xf4 44 ♕g1 ♗g4! Black's attack triumphs; the same goes for 43

W



♘xe3 ♗xg3 44 hxg3 ♕xf3+ 45 ♔g1 ♖xe3 46 ♗xe3 ♕xe3+ 47 ♔g2 ♕e2+ and ...♗h3.

43 ... ♘xd5 *(D)*

Black bravely ignores the offered queen, but now White could have equalized. The simple 43...♗xg3 44 ♘df6+ (44 ♘ef6+ ♔h8 45 ♗xe3 ♗e5 46 ♗d4 ♗xd4 47 ♖c7 ♕xc7 48 ♘xc7 ♖e2 49 ♖b1 ♗h3! mates) 44...♔h8 45 hxg3 (45 ♗xg3? loses outright to 45...♖xe4! 46 ♖xc8+ ♔g7 47 fxe4 ♕xf6) was tempting, but White's defensive resources are far greater than they may seem:

1) 45...♗b7 46 ♗xe3 ♗xe4 47 ♗d4 ♗xf3+ 48 ♔g1 ♖d8 49 ♗e5! (49 ♖c8 ♖xc8 50 ♘g4+ ♕g7 gives White a dreary endgame) 49...♕b3 50 ♘d7+! (taking b6 under control) 50...♔g8 51 ♖c3 ♕b7 (not 51...♕e6? 52 ♘f6+ ♔g7 53 ♘g4+, when White takes on f3 with check) 52 ♘f6+ ♔f8 53 ♘xh7+! ♕xh7 54 ♖xf3+ and in a simplified position with an exposed king, Black's winning chances are minimal.

2) 45...♖xe4 46 ♖xc8+ ♔g7 47 ♖c7! (after 47 fxe4? ♕xf6 48 ♖c7+ ♔g8 49 ♗xe3 ♕xa1+ 50 ♔g2 a5 Black should win) 47...♕xc7 (after 47...♖e7 48 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 49 ♖e1 White can build a fortress) 48 ♘xe4 ♕f7 49 ♘g5 ♕f6 50 ♖e1 and as Black can't win any of White's scattered pieces or pawns, he will hardly be able to realize his material advantage.

44 ♖xc8?

White can't survive 44 ♕g2 ♘f4 45 ♕f1 ♗h3 for long, but he should have continued the rough ride by protecting his weak f3-pawn with 44 ♘g5!. After 44...♗xg3 (44...♕g7 45 ♖xc8! ♖xc8 46 ♕g4 ♖e8 47 ♖d1 is even dangerous for Black, as it's White who is then attacking; 44...♕f5 45 ♕h4 is about equal) 45 ♘xf7 ♗f4

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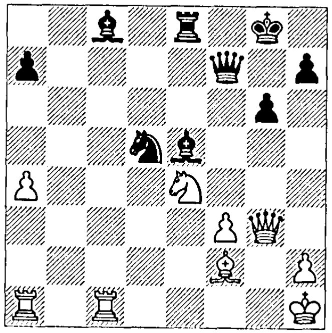

(45...♗xf2 46 ♘d6 ♗d7 47 ♘xe8 ♗xe8 is also drawish) 46 ♖c5 ♗e6 47 ♘e5! ♗xe5 48 ♖d1 ♘c3 49 ♖d3 White levels the material balance and the tension dissipates.

44 ... ♖xc8!

Vasiukov keeps his cool and refuses to be tempted. 44...♗xg3 45 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 46 hxg3 again enables White to consolidate his position and retain excellent drawing chances. One can say the main motive behind the repeated queen sacrifice is the improvement of the kingside pawn-structure!

45 ♕h3

45 ♕xe5? loses immediately to 45...♕xf3+ 46 ♔g1 ♘f4 47 ♘f6+ ♔f7.

45 ... ♖c2

46 ♖d1 ♘f4 *(D)*

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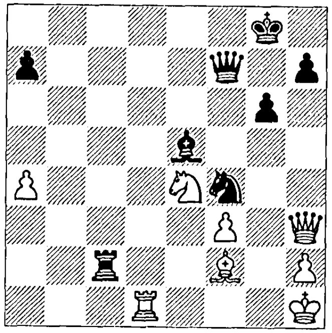


The tactical phase is over and although White has managed to keep material equal and even simplify the position considerably, his task remains very difficult. Black's pieces are more active and his king is relatively safe, while

White's pawns and king are weak. In a higher sense, White is on the brink of defeat.

47 ♕h6

After 47 ♕g4 h5 48 ♕g5 (48 ♖d8+ loses to 48...♔g7 49 ♕g5 ♖c1+ 50 ♗g1 ♗c7 51 ♘d6 ♗xd6 52 ♖xd6 ♔h7!, as there is no defence against ...♘h3 or ...♘e2 and 53 ♖f6 ♖xg1+! costs White a piece) 48...♘e6! (48...♘h3?! 49 ♕d8+ ♔g7 50 ♖d7 ♖c1+ fails to the surprising 51 ♗e1! ♖xe1+ 52 ♔g2 ♘f4+ 53 ♔f2) 49 ♕g2 ♗d4 (or 49...♖a2) Black has excellent winning chances.

47 ... ♘e6
48 ♘g5?!

48 ♕e3 ♗d4!? (even patient moves such as 48...a6 or 48...a5 deserve attention, since they leave White in his predicament) 49 ♖xd4 ♘xd4 50 ♘g5! (not 50 ♕xd4? ♕xf3+ 51 ♔g1 ♖c1+) 50...♘f5 (50...♕f6? 51 ♕e8+ ♕f8 52 ♕d7 turns the tables on Black) 51 ♘xf7 ♘xe3 52 ♘h6+ ♔g7 53 ♗xe3 ♖a2 54 ♘g4 ♖xa4 gives Black winning chances, but the text-move loses material.

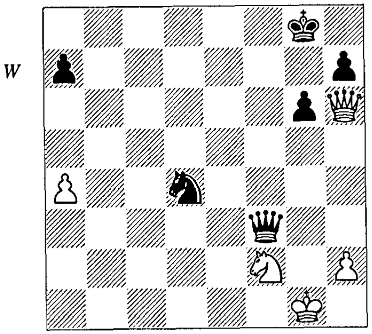
48 ... ♕b7!
49 ♘e4

Forced, since after 49 ♗g3 (49 ♔g1 ♗f4) 49...♗xg3 50 hxg3 ♖c5! 51 ♕h3 ♘f8! White loses a piece.

49 ... ♖xf2
50 ♘xf2 ♕xf3+
51 ♔g1 ♗d4!

It was still not too late to ruin the game with 51...♘f4? 52 ♖d8+ ♔f7 53 ♕f8+ ♔e6 54 ♖e8+ ♔d5 55 ♕f7+ ♔d4 (55...♔c6 56 ♕c4+) 56 ♖d8+ ♔c3 (56...♔c5 57 ♘d3+!) 57 ♖d3+!, when White wins.

52 ♖xd4 ♘xd4 *(D)*



53 ♕d2

53 ♕g5 ♘f5!? (53...♘e2+ 54 ♔f1 ♘f4 55 ♕d8+ ♔f7 56 ♕c7+ ♔f6 57 ♕d6+ ♔f5 58 ♕f8+ ♔g5 59 ♕e7+ ♔h6 60 ♕h4+ forces Black to interpose his knight and break the mating-net, while after 53...♕a8 54 ♕e7 there is no direct win either) 54 ♔f1 ♕d5 should lead to victory for Black; his plan is gradually to transfer his king to the queenside to take part in the attack on White's a-pawn.

53 ... ♕d5
54 ♕d3

This allows simplification, but even the more resilient 54 ♕b4 ♔f7!, with similar intentions to those in the previous note, is hopeless for White in the long run. White's main problem is that his knight must stay close to his exposed king and can't cooperate with the queen effectively.

54 ... ♘f3+
55 ♔h1

By forcing White's king into the corner, his black counterpart will be able to reach the queenside quickly and unopposed. The resulting knight endgame is easily won for Black.

55 ... ♕xd3
56 ♘xd3 ♔f7
57 ♘b4

This loses the a-pawn, but 57 ♔g2 ♘d4 58 ♔f2 ♔e6 59 ♔e3 ♔d5 is no improvement for White, as after ...♘e6 and ...♔c4 Black will penetrate further with his king.

57 ... ♘d4
58 ♔g2 ♔e6
59 ♔g3 a5
60 ♘d3 ♔d5
61 ♔f4 ♔c4
62 ♔e4 ♘f5
63 ♘e5+ ♔b3
64 ♔d5 ♔xa4
65 ♔c4 ♘e3+
66 ♔d3 ♘f1
67 ♘f3 ♔b3
68 ♔e2 ♘xh2!

The final shot. White's knight will be no match for Black's three passed pawns. Black has sacrificed nearly every available piece in this game.

69 ♘xh2 a4
70 ♘f3 a3
0-1

Summary

6 d4 and 8 ♗xc6 led to a typical Ruy Lopez position, similar to ones contested in the Lasker-Capablanca world championship match in 1921. White has more space and a better pawn-structure, but Black's position is solid enough and as we saw later on, opening the game prematurely can enhance the power of his bishops. Tiviakov spotted a minor difference and cleverly used the main idea of the ♕e2 systems by occupying the d-file with 9 ♖d1!?. However, Black's set-up can't be cracked by piece-play alone; pawns are required to do the job. In this sense 10 e5! was rejected unjustly; after 10...♘e8 11 ♘c3 White would have increased his space advantage and Black's chances to free himself by advancing his central pawns would have been limited (11...d5? loses material to 12 e6; 11...c5 12 ♘b3 is a positional concession for Black). In the manoeuvring phase after 10 ♘c3 Black held his own. The main disadvantage of the doubled pawns in this type of position is not their direct vulnerability, but their lack of flexibility, as any unprepared advance weakens the pawn-structure. However, in the game Black's pieces were placed well enough for both 19...c5 and 22...c6.

Another critical position arose after 23...♕c7. Tiviakov, as the pre-game favourite, chose a very risky plan – to lure Black's pawns even further forward. Both 24 ♘f5?! and especially 28 cxd4? can only be explained psychologically: White saw that Black could withstand a gradual onslaught and impatiently preferred violent action. However, this handed over the initiative to Vasiukov, who held on to it despite some minor inaccuracies by both sides. After the optimistic 37 ♕f1?! Black outplayed his opponent not only strategically, but also tactically (39...♖xf3!! is a fabulous blow, easy to overlook). Tiviakov countered imaginatively with 43 ♘c4!, but released the tension too soon with 44 ♖xc8?, after which he didn't get a second chance.

Game 24
Miguel Illescas – Ulf Andersson
Ubeda 1997
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf/Scheveningen Variation [B88]

1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3 d6
3 d4 cxd4
4 ♘xd4 ♘f6
5 ♘c3 e6
6 ♗c4

Although this was Fischer's favourite weapon against 5...a6, he used to meet the Scheveningen move-order more often with 6 g4, which remains, together with 6 ♗e2, White's most popular option.

6 ... a6
7 0-0

The ♗c4 system has had its waves of popularity, the last one following the Kasparov-Short match in 1993, when the challenger put Black's defences under considerable pressure. Illescas's move-order limits not only Black's, but also White's possibilities. The main alternative is the immediate 7 ♗b3, but here apart from the usual ideas 7...b5 and 7...♘c6, in 1989 Kasparov successfully reintroduced the move 7...♘bd7!?. This continuation still has a good reputation.

7 ... ♗e7

Now 7...♘bd7?! allows the dangerous positional sacrifice 8 ♗xe6! fxe6 9 ♘xe6 followed by ♘d5, when Black's centralized king will be subjected to a strong attack. On the other hand, after 7 0-0 White can't react to ...♘c6 with the sharp Velimirović Attack (a set-up with ♗e3, ♕e2 and 0-0-0) any more.

8 ♗b3 ♘c6

Naturally Black has other options. After 8...b5 White's main move for more than a decade has been 9 ♕f3, while the older 9 f4 0-0 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♘fd7 is considered rather innocuous. Recent practice has upheld this verdict: 12 ♗e3 ♘xe5 13 ♕h5 ♘bc6 14 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 15 ♖f3 b4 16 ♖h3 h6 17 ♖d1 ♕a5 18 ♘d5 exd5 19 ♖g3 d4 20 ♗d5 ♗g5 21 ♗xg5 ♕xd5 22 ♗f6 led to a perpetual in Short-Kasparov, Novgorod 1997. This brings us to arguably the cleverest move-order, 8...0-0!, when White hardly has anything better than transposing into the old line with 9 f4 b5.

9 f4 ♘xd4!?

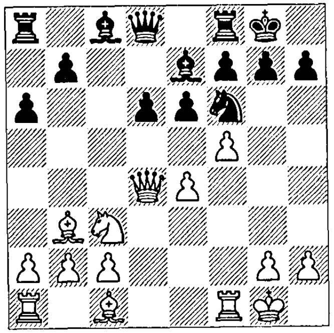
The Swede chooses an unusual sideline and is not curious what Illescas had on his mind after the more topical 9...0-0 10 ♗e3 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 b5 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘d7 14 ♘e4 ♗b7 15 ♘d6 ♗xd6 16 exd6 ♕g5 17 ♕e2 (or 17 ♖f2).

10 ♕xd4 0-0

11 f5!? *(D)*

Although White often plays the prophylactic 11 ♔h1 in this position, the text-move fits in with his plans and there is no reason to put off the ambitious advance.

B



11 ... ♔h8?!

Black trusts the inherent solidity of his defensive bastions and aims for piece counterplay without the usual Sicilian thrust ...b5. However, the text-move wastes a tempo and more importantly, the game will show that h8 is not a safe haven for the king. Therefore the common 11...b5 is more recommendable; e.g., 12 ♔h1 ♖b8 (Black has also other playable moves, such as 12...♘g4 or even 12...b4!? 13 ♕xb4 d5) 13 a3 a5 14 ♕d3 ♗d7 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 ♗f4 b4 17 axb4 axb4 18 ♘e2 ♔h8 19 e5 dxe5 20 ♗xe5 ♗b5 21 ♗c4 ♗xc4 22 ♕xc4 ♕c8! with equality, Ara.Minasian-Serper, Kstovo 1994.

12 ♔h1 ♗d7

13 ♗g5

13 fxe6 fxe6 14 e5?! is weaker in view of 14...dxe5 15 ♕xe5 ♘g4. The central tension is in White's favour, and relieving it only helps Black.

13 ... ♕a5

13...e5? would be a serious concession, as after 14 ♕d3 White has full control of the weakened d5-square.

14 ♖ad1

The greedy 14 ♗xf6?! ♗xf6 15 ♕xd6 ♖ad8 gives Black more than enough compensation.

14 ... ♖ad8 *(D)*

White's pawn is even more poisoned; after 14...exf5 15 exf5 ♗xf5? 16 ♘d5 Black either loses a piece by 16...♘xd5 17 ♖xf5, or gets mated.

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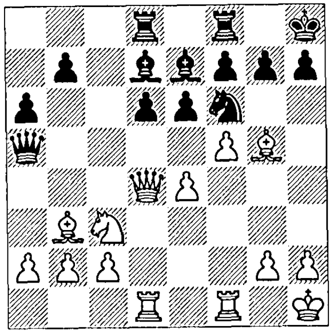

15 ♕d3

Not so much to protect the f5-pawn, as to remove the queen from a potentially exposed square and deploy it elsewhere. An interesting alternative is the aggressive 15 ♖d3 ♗c6 (the pawn is taboo anyway: after 15...exf5? 16 exf5 ♗xf5 17 ♖df3 White crashes through via f6) 16 ♖h3 ♕e5 17 ♕e3 (17 ♕f2? ♗xe4 gets White nowhere; 17 ♕xe5 dxe5 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 ♖hf3 ♗b4 also can't worry Black) 17...d5!? (this is the more enterprising approach; 17...♘g4? 18 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 19 ♕h3+ shows one of the drawbacks of 11...♔h8?!; 17...♖de8 18 ♗f4 ♕c5 is playable, but somewhat passive for Black) 18 ♗f4 (18 ♖xh7+? loses a piece to 18...♘xh7! 19 ♗xe7 d4 20 ♕d3 dxc3 21 ♗xd8 ♗b5, while 18 exd5 ♕xe3 19 ♖xe3?! ♘xd5 gives Black an advantage) 18...d4 and now:

1) 19 ♕g3?! is overambitious: 19...♕c5 (19...♘xe4? again fails to 20 ♖xh7+!) 20 e5 dxc3 21 ♕h4 (White's attack is over after 21 exf6 ♗xf6, but now it seems the defence is cracking) 21...♕b5! 22 ♖e1 (22 ♖g1 ♕e2! 23 exf6 ♕xg2+ mates) 22...♖d1! 23 ♖xd1 ♕e2 24 ♖g1 cxb2 and there is no suitable defence against all Black's threats, the main one being 25...♕xg2+!. This line gives us a glimpse of the much more serious problems White will have with his back rank in the course of the game.

2) More sensible is 19 ♗xe5 dxe3 20 ♗xf6 (after 20 ♖xe3? ♘g4 21 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 22 ♖g3 h5 23 h3 ♗h4 White fails to win back the piece) 20...♗xf6 21 ♖xe3 exf5, when Black has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

15 ... exf5!?

The opening is over and White has a space advantage; his pieces are also more active. Moreover, Black's central pawns are vulnerable; in short, White is better. As 15...b5 16 a3 doesn't really answer the problems he is facing, Andersson chooses a radical solution. The text-move activates the passive d7-bishop and rids Black of the necessity to protect e6, which could become annoying after 15...♗c6 16 ♗h4 (or 16 ♗d2!?). On the other hand, it also makes White's b3-bishop more potent.

16 exf5 ♗c6 *(D)*

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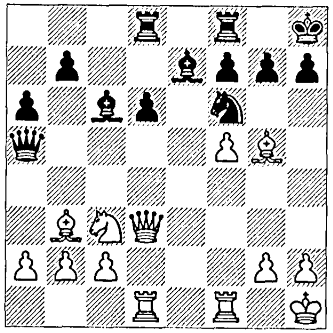


17 ♕d4?!

We have reached the critical moment of the game. 17 ♖fe1? ♘g4! offers Black tactical relief, but 17 ♕h3! is much more dangerous. Just as in the game, White wants to attack down the h-file, but he aims to put his rook in front of the queen with ♖d4/f4-h4, thus saving one move. Black has to be alert not to lose quickly:

1) 17...♕c7? 18 ♖d4 ♘e4 (after 18...♘g8 19 ♖h4 h6 20 f6 the attack is lethal) 19 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 20 f6 gxf6 21 ♗h6 f5 22 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 23 c3 ♕c6 24 ♖fd1 and, with ♗d5 coming, Black will be just an exchange down.

2) The narrow-minded 17...♘g8?! 18 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 19 f6 (19 ♖d4?! is weaker in view of 19...♗d7!) 19...gxf6 20 ♖xf6 ♖g8 21 ♖f2 gives Black some temporary activity, which however can't outweigh the permanent deformation of his pawn-structure.

3) More complicated is 17...♖de8 18 ♖d4, and now:

3a) 18...♘g8? 19 ♖h4 h6 20 ♖xh6+! ♘xh6 21 ♗xh6 ♔g8 (21...gxh6 22 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 23 ♖f4 wins for White) 22 ♗xg7! (Black defends after 22 ♕g4 ♕e5) 22...♔xg7 23 ♕g4+ ♔h7 (23...♔h6? 24 ♗xf7!) 24 ♕h5+ ♔g7 (24...♔g8 25 ♕g6+ ♔h8 26 ♕h6+ ♔g8 27 ♖f4 and White wins) 25 f6+ wins the black queen.

3b) Similar, but prettier, is 18...♕e5 19 ♖h4 h6 20 ♗f4 ♕c5 21 ♗e3! ♕a5 (Black's queen had to be lured to this unprotected square) 22 ♗xh6 gxh6 23 ♖xh6+ (after 23 ♕e3? ♘h7! Black holds the position) 23...♔g7 24 ♖h5!! ♘xh5 25 ♕g4+ ♔f6 (we already know 25...♔h6 26 ♗xf7 and 25...♔h8 26 ♕xh5+) 26 ♕xh5 and the assault triumphs, as White interposes decisively after 26...♗d8 27 ♕h4+ ♔g7 28 f6+ ♔g6 29 ♘d5!.

3c) The best chance is the tactical 18...♘e4!? 19 ♘xe4 (19 ♖xe4!?) 19...♗xe4:

3c1) 20 ♗d2 ♕e5 21 ♗c3 ♗f6 is OK for Black, because after 22 ♖e1? he has the reply 22...♕f4.

3c2) After 20 ♖xe4 ♗xg5 21 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 22 ♗xf7 ♖e1 the opposite-coloured bishops give Black reasonable chances to save the game.

3c3) The natural 20 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 21 f6 (21 ♕h4 ♕e5 {with the idea 22 ♖e1? ♗xg2+} promises White little) 21...gxf6 22 ♕h6 (22 ♕h4 ♕e5 23 ♖xe4 ♕xe4 24 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 is only a draw) 22...♖g8! 23 ♕xf6+ ♖g7 24 ♔g1! (24 ♕xe7 ♗xg2+ 25 ♔g1 ♗h3+ gives Black at least a perpetual) is better for White, since 24...♗xg2? is impossible due to 25 ♖g4, and the safer king and compact pawns speak in his favour.

3c4) 20 f6!? is even more forceful:

3c41) 20...gxf6? loses directly to 21 ♖xe4 fxg5 (or 21...♕xg5 22 ♖h4) 22 ♕e3.

3c42) 20...♕xg5 21 fxg7+ ♕xg7 22 ♖xe4. This position resembles line '3c3', but the opposite-coloured bishops only increase White's attacking potential. Black's survival chances are slim.

3c43) 20...♗xf6 21 ♗xf6 gxf6 22 ♕h4 f5 (22...♕e5? 23 ♖xe4!) 23 ♕f6+ ♔g8 24 ♖xd6 ♕e5 25 ♕xe5 ♖xe5 26 c3 with a lasting endgame advantage for White.

4) 17...d5!? gives a hint of the further course of the game and is Black's best chance. After 18 ♖d4 (White would like to have a rook on the d-file at the end of the line, but 18 ♖f4 ♔g8 19 ♖h4? enables Black to profit repeatedly from the back-rank weakness and beat off the attack after 19...♘e4! 20 ♘xe4 dxe4 21 ♖f1 ♗xg5 22 ♖xh7 ♗h6 23 ♖xh6 gxh6 24 ♕xh6 ♕xf5!) 18...♔g8 19 ♖h4 ♖fe8 (not 19...h6?, when 20 ♗xh6 gxh6 21 ♕e3 {or 21 ♖f3} quickly nails down the coffin) 20 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 21 ♖xh7 ♔f8, compared with the position after Black's 22nd move in the game, the black queen is still on a5, while, even more importantly, White's queen is ready to join the fray. Although Black has some compensation for the pawn, White has an advantage after 22 ♖d1!?.

17 ... d5

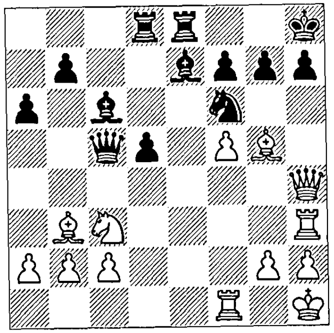
18 ♕h4

White continues his plan. 18 ♖fe1 forces 18...♕c7 (18...♖fe8? 19 ♖xe7! and 18...♕b4? 19 ♗xf6 are unpalatable for Black), but Black retains good counterchances after 19 ♖e2 (19 ♕h4 ♖fe8 is unclear) 19...♘e4 20 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 21 ♔g1 ♕g5 22 ♘xd5 ♘f6.

18 ... ♖fe8!

19 ♖d3 ♕c5

20 ♖h3 *(D)*



But what does Black want to do now? After 20...h6?, 21 ♗xh6 and ♗xg7 blows his position to bits...

20 ... ♔g8!

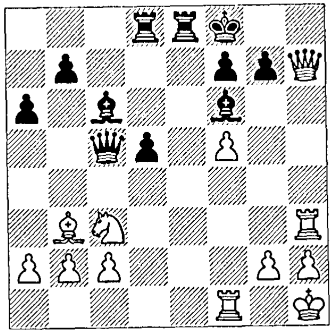
This cold-blooded move is also the only one; the exclamation mark is for Black's whole defensive concept. Beginning with 18...♖fe8! Andersson had to foresee that he could evacuate his king from the danger zone with minimal losses. This is a rare, but not unique motif; for better illustration let's mention just Anand-Kramnik, Las Palmas 1996.

21 ♗xf6?!

A logical, ambitious and consistent continuation. White should certainly avoid 21 ♖e1 h6!, when 22 ♗xh6? fails to 22...♘e4! 23 ♗g5 ♘f2+, but if White had fully foreseen the problems he will face after the text-move, then he would probably have preferred to bail out with 21 ♖g3!?. The threat is ♗xf6 and 21...♔f8? loses at once after 22 ♗h6!. 21...♖d6? is not much better since after 22 ♗h6 g6 (22...♗f8 23 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 24 ♕g5 wins back the piece with interest) 23 ♗g5 (or 23 ♗f4) the attack will soon net White material. Therefore 21...♔h8! is forced, and the repetition after 22 ♖h3 would fairly express the dynamic balance on the board.

21 ... ♗xf6

22 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 *(D)*



What has actually happened? White has taken an unimportant pawn, but Black has well-coordinated forces and a powerful bishop-pair; in particular, the c6-bishop will become a monster after ...d4. Andersson controls the e-file and White's back-rank troubles have become a constant feature of the position. Creating some *luft* would seriously weaken the kingside and White must beware of motifs such as ...♕f2. All in all Black has excellent compensation, but hardly more than that, as he still must think about his own king.

23 ♕h8+

23 ♕h5 stops ...d4, but after 23...♖e5! (not 23...♕f2? 24 ♕h8+ ♔e7 25 ♕xe8+), followed by ...♖de8, Black can prepare ...♖e1 in the near future. Similar is 23 ♖d3 ♖e5 (23...d4?! is over-optimistic: after 24 ♕h5 ♖d7 {24...g6? 25 ♕h7} 25 ♕h8+ ♔e7 26 ♖e1+ ♗e5 27 ♕h4+ it's still White at the helm). Nevertheless, White probably should have chosen between these options, as the text-move only chases the king in the desired direction.

23 ... ♔e7

24 ♕h5 ♖d7!

Andersson is known for his patience; the impetuous 24...d4?! 25 ♕xf7+ ♔d6 runs into 26 ♖d3!, when 26...♕xf5? loses to 27 ♖xd4+.

25 ♖e1+?!

Exchanging the sole defender of the back rank doesn't feel right, but the crucial error only comes later on. 25 ♘a4 ♕a5 doesn't solve anything for White, and 25 ♖d3 ♔d8 (25...d4?! 26 ♗xf7 ♖f8 27 ♖e1+ ♔d8 28 ♗e6 dxc3 29 ♗xd7 ♗xd7 30 ♖ed1 cxb2 31 ♖xd7+ ♔c8 is perhaps also possible, but needlessly complicated) 26 ♖dd1 (26 ♘xd5? ♗xd5 27 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 28 ♖xd5+ ♕xd5 29 ♖d1 ♔c8! backfires upon White for the usual reason) 26...d4 27 ♘b1 (27 ♗xf7? loses a piece to 27...♖ee7 28 ♕h8+ ♔c7 29 ♗e6 ♖d8, while 27 ♘e2 ♗b5 lands White in a nasty pin) 27...♖de7 leaves him very passive; Black's initiative grows inexorably.

Better was 25 ♘e2! ♔d8 (25...♗b5 26 a4 is about equal) 26 ♘f4. Once the pressure against d5 is ineffective, both White's minor pieces are misplaced and they have to be relocated (the knight moves away to prepare c3, activating the bishop). After 26...♗xb2 27 ♘d3 ♕d4 28 ♘xb2 ♕xb2 Black has only a slight edge.

25 ... ♔d8

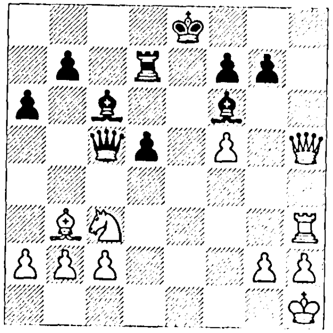
26 ♖xe8+

26 ♕d1 ♖xe1+ 27 ♕xe1 d4 gives Black a clear advantage, as White loses after 28 ♘e4? ♕e5 or 28 ♕f2? dxc3 29 ♕xc5 ♖d1+ 30 ♕g1 ♖xg1+ 31 ♔xg1 ♗d4+! and ...cxb2.

26 ... ♔xe8 *(D)*

27 ♕h8+?

As if hypnotized, Illescas continues to push forward. Now Black wins by force; the same goes for 27 ♘d1? ♖e7.



The only move to continue the fight was 27 ♕d1! ♔d8 (27...d4?! is unconvincing due to 28 ♖h8+ ♔e7 29 ♕e2+) 28 ♖h8+ (worse is 28 ♘a4 ♕a5 29 c3 d4; the rook must try to find its way home) 28...♔c7 29 ♖e8!? ♕f2 (29...d4?! 30 ♘e4 ♕xf5 31 ♘xf6 ♕xf6 32 ♕e2 doesn't give Black anything, but a viable alternative is 29...♗xc3 30 bxc3 ♕xc3, when compared with the similar position that could have arisen if White had played 25 ♘e2! the exchange of a pair of rooks enhances Black's chances; his king is safer and the b3-bishop is sidelined) 30 ♕f3 ♕xf3 31 gxf3 d4 32 ♘e4 d3 33 cxd3 ♗xb2. Although Black has a promising endgame, the outcome still remains very much open.

27 ... ♔e7

28 ♘d1

The only move. Black's threat was ...♕f2 and the desperate counterattack 28 ♖f3 fails once again to the recurrent motif: 28...d4 29 ♖f1 dxc3 30 ♖e1+ ♗e5 31 ♕xg7 ♔d8!.

28 ... d4

29 ♕g8

29 ♕h5 ♕e5! 30 ♕xf7+ transposes to the game.

29 ... ♕e5

Black could also have played 29...♕xf5.

30 ♕xf7+ ♔d8

Not 30...♔d6? 31 ♕e6+.

31 ♖h8+

Now 31 ♕e6 ♖e7! 32 ♖h8+ ♔c7 33 ♕xe5+ ♖xe5 costs White a piece.

31 ... ♔c7

32 ♕e8

32 ♖e8 doesn't help, as after 32...♕xf5 33 ♕c4 d3! 34 ♖e1 ♕g5 35 ♖e4 (35 ♘e3 d2 or 35 ♖g1 ♗d4 is even simpler) 35...b5 36 ♕b4

♗xe4 37 ♕xe4 ♕d2 38 cxd3 ♖e7 the game is over.

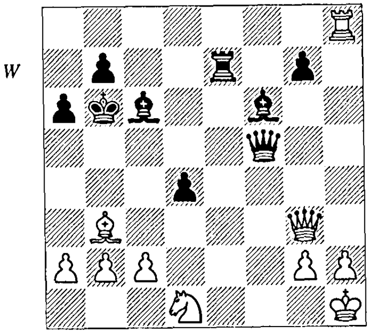
32 ... ♕xf5
33 ♕e1

After 33 ♔g1 ♕g4 the double attack wins.

33 ... ♖e7
34 ♕g3+

34 ♕g1 gives Black a pleasant choice between 34...♕g4! threatening 35...♕xg2+, the forcing 34...♗xg2+!? 35 ♔xg2 ♕g4+ 36 ♔f2 ♕e2+ 37 ♔g3 ♗e5+ 38 ♔h4 ♕f3 39 ♖c8+ ♔b6, when White can only delay mate at a huge price, and the equally decisive continuation 34...♖e2.

34 ... ♔b6 *(D)*



35 ♗c4

Time-trouble. However, even after 35 ♔g1 ♖e2 White can't parry the numerous threats (...♖xg2+, ...♕e4, ...♗e5).

35 ... ♕xc2
36 ♗b3 0-1

White resigned before Black could choose between the two forced mates 36...♖e1+ and 36...♕xg2+.

Summary

An opening inaccuracy often has serious consequences for Black in an ultra-sharp opening such as the 6 ♗c4 Najdorf/Scheveningen Sicilian. Here after the somewhat careless 11...♔h8?! White quickly developed a threatening initiative, which was on the very verge of growing into a direct and very strong attack. Andersson made a good practical choice with 15...exf5!?; gaining scope for tactical piece counterplay outweighs such abstract considerations as giving up the centre and isolating the d-pawn. However, White's assault remained no less dangerous and after the more testing 17 ♕h3! Black would have been hard-pressed to keep the game going. This move also illustrates the maxim: "When occupying an open file, place your queen behind your rook or rooks." In our case the h-file was only semi-open, but the respective merits of 17 ♕h3! and 17 ♕d4?! bear out the validity of the rule.

Inspired defence has won many a game and this is one of them. The whole plan started with 18...♖fe8! deserves commendation; it is always a difficult decision to evacuate the king across the centre (Black's king finally went all the way to b6!). The additional psychological benefit of this bold plan was that Illescas got carried away and after 22...♔f8, continuing to pursue the fleeing king when White's position urgently required consolidation. 23 ♕h8+, 25 ♖e1+?! and 27 ♕h8+? were all mistakes in an ascending order of gravity. Although most of the lines from move 15 onwards are pervaded with various back-rank tricks, White erroneously proceeded to weaken his defences to such an extent that Black's counterattack after 28...d4 made any meaningful resistance impossible.

Game 25

Alexei Shirov – Artur Yusupov

Ter Apel 1997

Petroff Defence [C43]

1 e4 e5
2 ♘f3 ♘f6
3 d4 ♘xe4
4 ♗d3 d5

In 1993 Murey shocked his opponent Timman and the chess world with the surprising 4...♘c6!?. Meanwhile theory and practice naturally haven't stood still, and although the temporary piece sacrifice is still played, it's no wonder weapon and Black must neutralize White's pressure with care. Probably White's best continuation is 5 dxc5!? d5 6 exd6 ♘xd6 7 ♘c3 ♗e7 8 0-0 (8 ♘d5 ♗e6 9 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 10 0-0 0-0-0! is satisfactory for Black) 8...♗e6!? (8...0-0 9 ♘d5 ♗f5 10 ♗f4 ♗g6 11 c4! ♘e8 12 ♗xg6 hxg6 13 ♖e1 ♗d6 14 ♗g5 f6 15 ♗e3 ♖f7 16 ♕c2 g5 17 ♖ad1 gave White a clear advantage in Movsesian-Hraček, German Cup 1997) 9 ♗f4 0-0 10 ♖e1 with a slight edge.

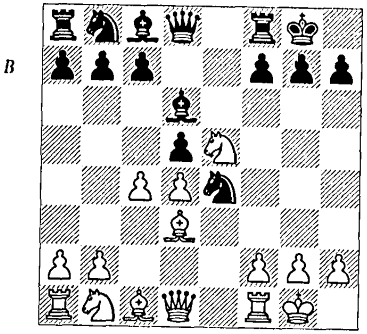
5 ♘xe5 ♗d6

The Petroff has lately become very popular among the top players, and even Shirov has included it in his black repertoire. 5...♘d7 is currently considered best. This variation only offers further proof of the well-known fact that it's prudent for the defender to abandon symmetry at an early stage (see also Game 3). After 6 ♘xd7 ♗xd7 7 0-0 ♗d6 8 c4 c6 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 ♕h5 (10 ♘c3 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 0-0!? 12 ♕h5 g6 13 ♕xd5 ♕c7 and Black regains the pawn with equality) 10...0-0! 11 ♕xd5 ♗c6 12 ♕h5 g6 13 ♕h3 ♘g5 (13...♗b4 14 ♗c3 ♖e8 is another playable option) 14 ♕g4 ♘e6 15 ♗h6 ♖e8 16 ♘c3 ♘xd4!? 17 ♖ad1 ♗e5 18 f4 f5 19 ♕h3 ♗f6 Black had little to fear in Nijboer-Van der Sterren, Dutch Ch (Rotterdam) 1999.

6 0-0 0-0

6...♘d7 is the last possible chance to reach the lines in the previous note. Here though, Black must reckon with 7 c4 c6 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 ♘c3!?, when White's lead in development gives him the initiative.

7 c4 *(D)*



7 ... ♘c6!?

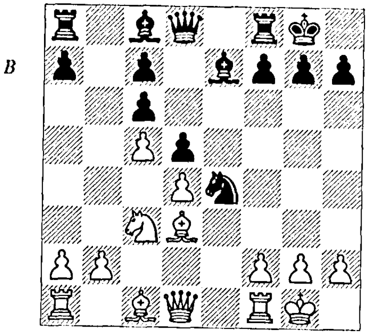
Yusupov himself introduced this move into high-level practice. Black allows a break-up of his queenside pawn-structure, but intends that his active piece-play and pressure against the d4-pawn will compensate. The relevant games have shown this is not quite sufficient for equality, but other moves have even more serious drawbacks. The sharp tactical line 7...♗xe5 8 dxe5 ♘c6 9 cxd5 ♕xd5 10 ♕c2 ♘b4 11 ♗xe4 ♘xc2 12 ♗xd5 ♗f5 13 g4 ♗xg4 14 ♗f4 ♘xa1 15 ♗e4 f5 16 ♗d5+ ♔h8 17 ♖c1 c6 18 ♗g2 ♖fd8 19 ♘d2 ♖xd2 20 ♗xd2 ♖d8 21 ♗c3 ♖d1+ 22 ♖xd1 ♗xd1 has been refuted by 23 ♗f1! ♗f3 24 ♗d3! ♗e4 25 ♗c4 ♗d5 26 ♗xd5 cxd5 27 ♔f1 with a won endgame, Zapata-Zarnicki, São Paulo 1992, while the copycat 7...c6 8 ♘c3! ♘xc3 9 bxc3 ♘d7 also promises White an advantage after 10 f4 or 10 ♖e1!?.

8 ♘xc6

Black needn't worry about 8 cxd5 ♘xd4 9 ♗xe4 ♗xe5.

8 ... bxc6
9 c5 ♗e7
10 ♘c3 *(D)*

This is more energetic than 10 f3 ♘g5 11 ♘c3 ♖e8! (now Black naturally doesn't weaken his position with ...f5; this subtle move is directed against 12 ♗e3?, which could now be met by 12...♗xc5!) 12 ♕a4 ♗d7 13 ♗d2 ♖b8 14 ♖ab1 ♗f6 15 ♔h1 h5 16 ♘e2 h4 17 h3 ♕c8 18 ♗a6 ♕d8 19 ♗d3 ♕c8 20 ♗a6 ♕d8 with a repetition of moves in Kasparov-Yusupov, Horgen 1995.



10 ... f5?!

This move is strategically suspect, as it creates an ugly and permanent hole on e5. White finds a good set-up to make use of this, so alternatives should be investigated:

1) 10...♘xc3?! is also not good since after 11 bxc3 the d4-pawn gets extra protection and with ♕a4 and ♗f4 in the air, Black's c-pawns are very vulnerable.

2) Yusupov suffered a bad experience with 10...♗f6 11 ♕c2! ♗xd4 12 ♘xe4 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 ♕h4 14 g3 ♕f6 15 ♗e3! ♗xe3 16 fxe3 ♕h6 17 ♖f4 g5 18 ♖f2 ♗h3 19 ♗f5 and White went on to convert his advantage into victory in Ivanchuk-Yusupov, Horgen 1995.

3) Even the solid 10...♗f5 has been tested by Black. After 11 f3! (11 ♕c2 ♗g6! 12 ♘xe4 dxe4 13 ♗xe4 ♕xd4 14 ♗xg6 hxg6 15 ♗e3 ♕b4 16 a3 ♕b5 17 ♗d4 ♗f6 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 19 ♕c3 ♔g7 led only to equality in Shirov-Yusupov, Bundesliga 1995/6) 11...♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♗xd3 13 ♕xd3, as in Shirov-Hübner, Frankfurt rpd 1996, even the best continuation 13...a5 14 ♖e1 doesn't fully solve Black's problems. Although the exchange of the light-squared bishops helps, White will be the first to occupy the open files with his rooks and he has a better pawn-structure.

4) So perhaps 10...♘g5!? 11 ♕a4 ♗d7 deserves attention, although here the circumstances are not as good for Black as in the quoted Kasparov-Yusupov game.

11 f3

Shirov chooses a sound and logical move, not interested in how his opponent intended to improve upon 11 ♘e2 ♗f6 12 ♕a4 ♗d7 13 f3 ♘g5 14 ♘f4 ♕e7 15 ♗d2 g6 16 ♖ae1 ♕g7 17 ♗c3 h5 18 ♗a6 ♖ab8 19 ♘d3 h4 20 ♘e5, which gave White a clear advantage in Timman-Yusupov, Linares Ct (8) 1992.

11 ... ♘g5

12 ♕a4 ♗d7

13 ♗f4! ♗f6

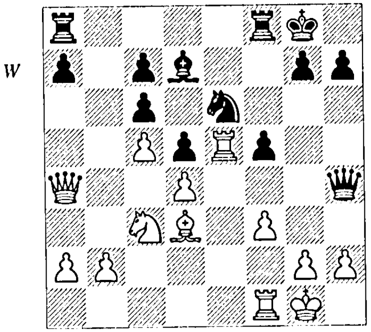
We have already spoken about the weak e5-square; the passive 13...♘f7? loses material without compensation after 14 ♕a5! ♗f6 15 ♘e2.

14 ♖ae1 ♘e6!?

Black goes for a forcing tactical line in an attempt to shake off the positional pressure. After 14...♘f7 15 ♘e2!? a5 16 ♗d2 White retains the advantage.

15 ♗e5 ♗xe5

16 ♖xe5 ♕h4 *(D)*



This aggressive sortie is the logical consequence of 14...♘e6!?. White can't protect his central pawn by normal means and must choose between two diametrically different ways to maintain his pull.

17 f4!?

One couldn't expect anything like 17 ♘e2? ♘xc5 at this level, but a more sedate and safer alternative is 17 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 (17...♘xc5? loses a pawn to 18 dxc5 ♕xa4 19 ♗xh7+) 18 ♖xf5 ♘xc5 (18...♘xd4? 19 ♖e5 gets Black nowhere) 19 dxc5 (not 19 ♕b4? ♘d3 20 ♕b7 ♕xd4+ 21 ♔h1 ♖e8, when the smothered mate threat wins back the material with interest) 19...♕xa4 20 ♘xa4 ♗xf5 21 b3 (or 21 ♔f2). Although the knight is far from its ideal d4-square, White nevertheless has a lasting advantage and can play for a win without any risks. Objectively White's actual choice might not be better, but it leads to great complications, which are Shirov's *métier.*

17 ... ♘xf4

Black can't hesitate; otherwise he is positionally bankrupt.

18 g3 ♘h3+

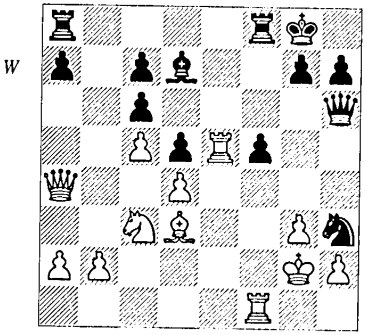
19 ♔g2 ♕h6 *(D)*

19...♕h5? is insufficient, since here the queen is inactive and any counterplay with ...f4 comes too late. After 20 ♘xd5 (20 ♗e2!?) 20...♖ae8 21 ♗e2 ♕h6 22 ♘xc7 ♖xe5 23 dxe5 f4 24 e6 White is winning.

20 ♘xd5

White rightly rejects 20 ♗xf5?! ♗xf5 21 ♖exf5 ♖xf5 22 ♖xf5 ♘g5 23 h4 ♘e6!, when the c6-pawn is taboo, and so the position is unclear.

20 ... f4?

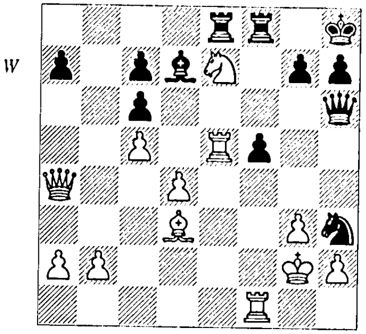


We have reached the critical position for the assessment of White's ambitious 17 f4!?. As the text-move puts Black on the verge of defeat, we have to look for better moves. Most of the following lines originate from Shirov:

1) 20...♘g5? 21 ♘e7+ ♔h8 22 ♘xf5 ♕h3+ 23 ♔g1 g6 24 ♘h4 simply costs Black a pawn.

2) 20...♔h8? 21 ♘e3! cuts down Black's options and forces him to transpose either into line '1' (21...♘g5 22 ♘xf5), or to the game after 21...f4 22 ♘f5.

3) After 20...♖ac8 21 ♘e7+ ♔h8 *(D)* White has three possibilities:



3a) 22 ♕d1 f4! and now:

3a1) The wild complications work out well for Black after 23 ♖h5 f3+ 24 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 25 ♕xf3 (25 ♘g6+ ♕xg6 26 ♗xg6 ♖f2+ 27 ♔h1 ♗g4! 28 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 29 ♗xe8 ♗xd1 30 ♖xh3 ♗f3+ 31 ♔g1 ♖g2+ 32 ♔f1 ♖xb2 is worse for White) 25...♕d2+ 26 ♗e2 ♘g5 27 ♕d3 ♕xb2 28 ♘g6+ ♔g8 29 ♘e5 h6 and White's rook is misplaced.

3a2) Bailing out with 23 ♘f5 ♕g5 24 ♘e7 is more sensible, as 24...f3+?! 25 ♖xf3 ♗g4 26 ♖xg5 ♗xf3+ 27 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 28 ♖e5! ♖xd3 29 ♘g6+ can be better only for White.

3b) 22 ♗xf5 ♖xe7 23 ♗xd7!? (23 ♖xe7 ♕d2+ 24 ♔xh3 ♖xf5 25 ♖xf5 ♗xf5+ 26 g4 ♗xg4+! 27 ♔g3 ♗h5! 28 ♖e5 ♕d3+ 29 ♔h4 ♕f3! forces a perpetual) 23...♖xf1 24 ♔xf1 ♖f7+ 25 ♖f5 ♖xf5+ 26 ♗xf5 ♕f6 (26...♕e3 27 ♗xh3 ♕f3+ 28 ♔e1 ♕e3+ 29 ♔d1 ♕g1+ 30 ♔c2 ♕xh2+ 31 ♔c3 ♕xg3+ 32 ♔b4 ♕xh3 33 ♕xc6 and the passed d-pawn is too strong) 27 ♕c2 g6 28 ♔g2 ♘g5 29 h4 (29 ♗e4 ♕e6 draws) 29...gxf5 (after 29...♘f7 30 ♗e4 White retains the extra pawn) 30 hxg5 ♕xd4 (30...♕xg5?! is weaker in view of 31 ♕e2) 31 ♕xf5 ♕xb2+ 32 ♕f2 ♕g7! (32...♕xf2+? loses to 33 ♔xf2 ♔g7 34 ♔e3 ♔f7 35 ♔e4 ♔e6 36 a4 a5 37 g4 ♔e7 38 ♔e5 ♔f7 39 ♔f5 ♔g7 40 ♔e6, as the c-pawn queens with check) with a drawish endgame.

3c) 22 ♕c2! f4 (22...g6 23 d5, followed by ♕c3, is good for White) and now:

3c1) 23 ♗xh7 ♖f7 24 ♗g6 ♖fxe7 25 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 26 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 27 ♕f5 ♗g6! saves the knight and leaves White in trouble.

3c2) 23 ♘f5 is not convincing in view of 23...♕g5, the point being that 24 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 25 ♔xh3 ♗xf5+ 26 ♗xf5? fails to 26...♕h5+.

3c3) 23 ♗f5! ♗xf5 (23...♖xe7? loses to 24 ♖xe7 ♗xf5 25 ♕xf5; 23...fxg3 24 hxg3 doesn't help Black) 24 ♘xf5 ♕h5 (24...♕g6 25 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 26 ♔xh3 ♕h5+ 27 ♘h4 g5 28 ♕e4 is virtually winning for White) 25 ♘xg7 f3+ 26 ♔h1 ♖xe5 27 ♘xh5 ♖xh5 28 ♕e4 and White will gradually unravel his forces.

4) Black should have activated his queen immediately by 20...♕d2+! 21 ♗e2. Then:

4a) 21...♘g5? 22 ♘xc7! (22 ♕b4 is less incisive) and the checks on the a2-g8 diagonal aid White's defence and make matters difficult for Black's queen after, for example, 22...♖ab8 23 ♖f2!.

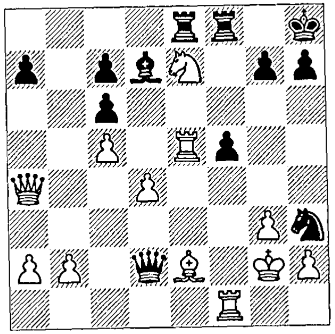
4b) 21...f4 is not ideal either:

4b1) The simple approach is 22 ♘xf4 ♘xf4+ 23 gxf4 ♕xb2 (23...♖xf4 24 ♕b3+ ♔h8 25 ♖d1 sends Black's queen into exile on a5 and enables White to penetrate decisively on the seventh rank, as 25...♖g4+ loses material to 26 ♔h1 ♕f4 27 ♖f1 ♕xd4 28 ♕f7!) 24 ♕b3+ ♕xb3 25 axb3 with a lasting advantage; Black's bishop is very poor.

4b2) More ambitious is 22 ♕b4!? (22 ♕b3, with the idea that 22...♖ab8 is met by 23 ♘b4+ ♔h8 24 ♕c3, is similar), when the attempt to avoid a bad endgame with 22...f3+ 23 ♖xf3 ♕c1 24 ♘e7+ ♔h8 25 ♘f5 ♖ab8 backfires due to 26 ♕c3! (26 ♕c4 ♕xb2 27 ♔xh3 g6 {or even 27...♖b4 28 ♕d3 g6} is OK for Black) 26...♕xb2 (White gradually consolidates after 26...♕xc3 27 bxc3 ♘g5 28 ♖f4 ♖b2 29 ♘h4) 27 ♕xb2 ♖xb2 28 ♔xh3 g6 29 ♖e7.

4c) 21...♖ae8! is the best continuation. 22 ♘e7+ (22 ♕b4? ♕xe2+! 23 ♖xe2 ♖xe2+ 24 ♔xh3 cxd5, with threats such as ...g5-g4 and ...♖f6, is very dangerous for White; 22 ♖d1 gets White nowhere after the reply 22...♕xb2 23 ♘e7+ ♔h8 24 ♔xh3 ♖f7) 22...♔h8 *(D)*, and now:

W



4c1) 23 ♔xh3 ♖f7! (23...f4+ 24 ♔g2 ♗g4 25 ♕d1! f3+ 26 ♔g1 is insufficient for Black) 24 ♔g2 (White must get his king out of the danger zone; 24 ♗h5? f4+ 25 ♗g4 {or 25 g4 f3} 25...fxg3! 26 ♗xd7 ♕xh2+ 27 ♔g4 g2 28 ♘g6+ hxg6 29 ♖xe8+ ♔h7 wins for Black) 24...♖fxe7 25 ♖f2 is about equal.

4c2) 23 ♕d1! is the fighting move. 23...♕g5 (23...♕xb2? loses to 24 ♔xh3 ♖f7 25 ♘xf5 ♖xf5 26 ♖xe8+ ♖f8+ 27 ♗g4 ♗xg4+ 28 ♕xg4 ♖xe8 29 ♖f7) 24 ♕c1 ♕f6 25 ♕e3 f4 26 gxf4 ♘xf4+ 27 ♔h1 and now:

4c21) 27...♗h3 28 ♖xf4! ♕xf4 29 ♘g6+ (29 ♕xh3? ♕c1+ 30 ♔g2 ♖xe7!) 29...hxg6 30 ♖xe8 with a better endgame for White.

4c22) 27...♖f7 28 ♗c4 (28 ♘g6+!? is also possible) and now:

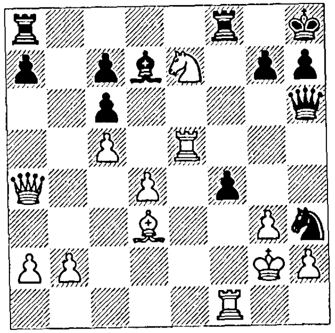
4c221) 28...♖fxe7 29 ♕xf4 (29 ♖xf4 ♗f5!! 30 ♖fxf5 ♕xf5 31 ♖xe7 ♕b1+ 32 ♔g2 ♕g6+ is a perpetual) 29...♗h3 30 ♖f3! and Black is fighting for a draw.

4c222) 28...♖exe7 29 ♖xf4! (29 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 30 ♕xf4 ♗h3 31 ♕xf6 gxf6 32 ♖g1 ♗e6 is equal) 29...♕xf4 30 ♖xe7 ♕xe3 31 ♖xe3 ♖f4 32 ♗e6! again gives White some winning prospects.

4c23) 27...g5!? 28 ♗c4 ♗h3 29 ♖f2! (29 ♖g1 is weaker in view of 29...♗e6!) and White has some advantage, although the position remains sharp.

21 ♘e7+ ♔h8 *(D)*

W



22 ♘f5

The immediate 22 ♗f5? is much worse, as long as Black doesn't lose control: 22...fxg3 (22...♘g5 23 ♗xd7 fxg3 24 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 25 hxg3 ♘f3 26 ♘f5 and 22...f3+ 23 ♖xf3 ♘g5 24 ♖f4 are both insufficient for Black, while 22...♗xf5? 23 ♘xf5 transposes to the note to Black's 24th move) 23 hxg3 (23 ♗xd7? loses to 23...♕d2+ 24 ♔xh3 ♕xh2+) 23...g6! 24 ♗xd7 ♕d2+! (24...♖xf1 25 ♔xf1 ♖f8+ 26 ♘f5 gxf5 is not very clear; Black already has greater ambitions) 25 ♔xh3 ♖xf1 26 ♕xc6 (26 ♗xc6 ♕h6+ 27 ♔g4 ♖af8 is similar; the threat is ...♖f4+) 26...♖af8. White's king is very exposed and there is no plausible defence against the mating attack; e.g., 27 ♕e4 ♕h6+ 28 ♔g4 ♖h1!.

22 ... ♕g5

Yusupov, severely short of time, tries to keep the position as complicated as possible.

1) Another attempt to maintain the tension by keeping the queens on is 22...♗xf5 23 ♖xf5 (after 23 ♗xf5 fxg3 24 hxg3 ♘g5 the position is unclear) 23...♖fe8!? (23...g6? doesn't work due to 24 ♕xc6; both 23...♖fb8 24 ♕c2 and 23...♖ae8 24 ♕d1 are weaker options for Black – he should try to keep both his rooks as active as possible) 24 ♕d1 (24 ♕c4 ♖e3!? gives Black counterplay) 24...g6 (24...♖e3 25 ♖f3 is not ideal either) and now:

1a) 25 ♖f6? is weak due to 25...♕g5! 26 ♖xc6 fxg3 with the idea 27 hxg3 ♖e3 28 ♖f3 ♘f4+!.

1b) After 25 ♖f7, 25...fxg3?! 26 hxg3! ♘g5 27 ♖h1 ♘xf7 28 ♖xh6 ♘xh6 29 ♕f3 ♖e6 30 ♗c4 is miserable for Black, but 25...♖e3!? still keeps the game alive.

1c) 25 ♖e5! is the right move; after 25...♖xe5 26 dxe5 fxg3 27 hxg3 ♘g5 28 ♕g4 the misplaced knight will force Black to go in for a miserable endgame after all.

2) 22...♕h5 (22...♕g6 23 ♕c2 ♕g4 24 ♕d1 ♕xd1 leads to the same position) 23 ♕d1! (23 ♘xg7?! is risky in view of 23...♕g4) and now Black is forced to exchange queens. Although he manages to keep the material equal after 23...♕xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♘g5, White retains a sizeable advantage:

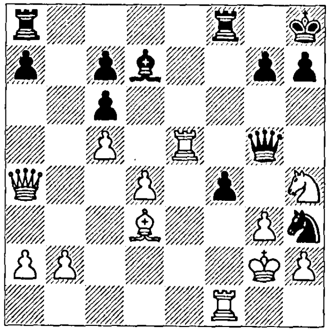
2a) 25 gxf4 ♘e6 26 ♔g3 g6 27 d5!? ♘xc5 (27...cxd5 28 c6 ♗c8 29 ♘e7 ♘xf4 30 ♖f1! ♘h5+ 31 ♖xh5 ♖xf1 32 ♘xg6+ gives White a won endgame) 28 ♘e7 is promising for White.

2b) 25 h4 ♘e6 26 g4! is even more consistent. Black's tactical efforts are over and his weak pawns limit him to a thankless defence.

Although the text-move is objectively not much stronger, it offers more practical chances.

23 ♘h4! *(D)*

B



Here the knight stands much better than on e7 in the previous lines, as it neutralizes Black's attacking ambitions.

23 ... ♕h6

The knight's role is not solely defensive, as 23...♕f6? 24 ♖h5 shows.

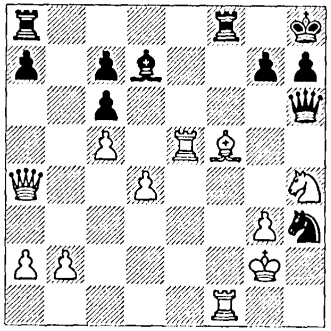
24 ♗f5 fxg3

24...♗xf5 25 ♘xf5 ♕g6 (25...♕h5 26 ♕d1 is the same) 26 ♕c2 (26 ♘h4? ♕g4 27 ♕d1 runs into 27...♘f2!) 26...♕g4 27 ♕d1 ♕xd1 28 ♖xd1 ♘g5 29 gxf4 leads to a technical endgame with an extra pawn for White.

25 hxg3 *(D)*

25 ♔xh3? gxh2 26 ♕c2 g5 turns the tables on White.

B



25 ... g6?

With about a minute left on his clock, Yusupov goes for a desperate counterattack. Other ideas:

1) The 'normal' continuation would be 25...♗xf5:

1a) 26 ♖exf5 (26 ♖fxf5 ♘f4+! is similar) 26...♖xf5 27 ♖xf5 (after 27 ♘xf5 ♕h5 28 ♕d1 ♘f4+! it is White who has to be careful) 27...g5! and White's king is too vulnerable to allow him winning chances.

1b) The natural 26 ♘xf5 ♕h5 27 ♕xc6 (27 ♘xg7!? and 27 ♕d1 are strong alternatives) 27...♘g5 28 ♕d7! is correct. Black's counterplay then fails due to his weak back rank.

2) The best move, 25...g5!, was only pointed out subsequently by the *New in Chess* reader Mr Tikkanen. Then:

2a) 26 ♗xd7 ♖xf1 27 ♔xf1 gxh4 28 ♗xh3 ♖f8+ 29 ♔e1 hxg3 30 ♗g2 ♖f2 (30...♕c1+ 31 ♕d1 ♕xb2 32 ♖e2 ♕c3+ also leads to a repetition) 31 ♖e8+ (31 ♖e2? loses to 31...♖xg2!) 31...♔g7 32 ♕d1 ♕f4 33 ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 34 ♕xe2 ♕c1+ draws.

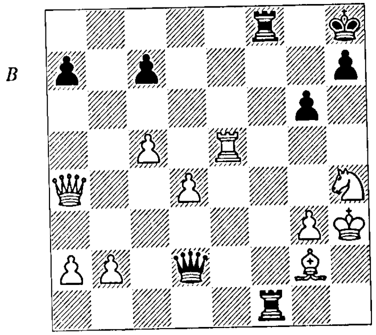
2b) Better is 26 ♘g6+! hxg6 27 ♗xd7 ♖xf1 28 ♔xf1 ♖f8+ 29 ♔e2 ♕h5+ (29...g4 30 ♖e8 helps White) 30 ♔d3 (or even 30 ♔d2!? ♖f2+ 31 ♔d3). There is no mate in sight, and White's king has potential hiding places on the a-file, or possibly even in the centre. If White survives Black's dangerous counterattack unscathed, he'll be much better.

26 ♗xd7 ♕d2+

27 ♔xh3 ♖xf1

28 ♗xc6 ♖af8

29 ♗g2 *(D)*



Compared with the position after 22 ♗f5?, White's king is safe on h3, protected by his knight.

29 ... ♖1f2

Now White strikes on the seventh rank, but other moves were no better. After 29...♖1f7 White can even play 30 d5!? g5 (30...♕h6 31 ♖e8 g5 32 ♕d4+ ♔g8 33 ♖xf8+ and no matter how Black takes back, 34 d6 wins) 31 ♘f3! and now taking the knight by 31...♖xf3 32 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 33 ♕e8+ ♔g7 34 ♖e7+ leads to mate.

After 29...♖1f6 30 ♕d7 g5 White must avoid the last trap with 31 ♖e7 (31 ♘f5? g4+ 32 ♔h2 ♖xf5! 33 ♖xf5 ♕h6+ is a perpetual) 31...♖h6 32 ♕g4 ♖g8 33 ♕e4, winning easily.

30 ♕d7 g5

30...♖2f7 31 ♖e7 is hopeless for Black.

31 ♖e7 ♕c2

32 ♗e4

Shirov has accurately calculated that Black couldn't hurt his king any more. However, as in the note to Black's 29th move, 32 ♕g4! ♖g8 33 ♕e6 was simpler.

32 ... ♖h2+

33 ♔g4 ♖xh4+

After 33...♕e2+ 34 ♘f3 h5+ 35 ♔xg5 ♕e3+ (35...♖g8+ 36 ♗g6 is quicker) 36 ♔g6 ♖g8+ White's king can either calmly escape with 37 ♔f6 ♕h6+ 38 ♔e5, or personally mate its black counterpart: 37 ♖g7! ♕xe4+ 38 ♔h6 ♕e3+ 39 ♘g5.

34 gxh4 ♕e2+

35 ♔xg5 ♖g8+

35...♕e3+ also loses, to 36 ♔h5 ♕e2+ 37 ♕g4.

36 ♔f6 1-0

Black's flag fell, but the checks end anyway after 36...♖f8+ (36...♕f2+ 37 ♔e6) 37 ♖f7 ♕f2+ 38 ♔e6.

Summary

By playing the Petroff, Black indicates he wants to achieve a solid symmetrical position, where White's extra tempo should gradually lose its significance. However, chess is not that simple and the straightforward symmetrical move 5...♗d6 has been abandoned nowadays, as after 7 c4 Black is forced to make positional concessions. Yusupov was unwilling to accept a weakness on d5 and chose the interesting 7...♘c6!? instead. The doubled pawns, although practically inaccessible with a board full of Black's active pieces, became a permanent negative feature of his position. 10...f5?! created further weaknesses; after just 10 moves of a supposedly sedate opening, Black had to rely mostly on tactics.

Despite all this, it was White who had to make the first critical decision: how to curb Black's activity after 16...♕h4. The endgame after 17 ♗xf5 is undoubtedly promising, but Black would retain drawing chances and with only two pairs of pieces on the board his chances to go wrong would be smaller than in the game. The choice between this continuation and the double-edged text-move is a matter of taste, influenced by other important factors: tournament position, the clock situation, etc. (see also Kasparov's choice in Game 18). Sure enough, Yusupov immediately erred with the natural 20...f4?. In a higher sense this was probably the losing move, as the queen didn't get a second chance to join the counterattack effectively. The analysis reveals another notable fact – although White spurned simplification on move 17, it was his main weapon in the tactical slugfest. Let's mention just 22 ♕b4!? in note '4b2' to Black's 20th move and 23 ♕d1! in line '4c2' of that note to see the general tendency: the fractured c-pawns make any ending difficult for Black. It's not surprising that Yusupov sacrificed material (25...g6?) just to avoid such a predicament, but handicapped by the lack of time he missed his last dangerous counterchance, 25...g5!. After that omission, Shirov wrapped up the game efficiently.

Game 26

Valery Salov – Miguel Illescas

Dos Hermanas 1997

Queen's Gambit Declined, Slav Defence [D17]

1 d4 ♘f6

2 ♘f3 d5

3 c4 c6

4 ♘c3 dxc4

5 a4 ♗f5

6 ♘e5

White ambitiously intends to occupy the centre, which demands energetic countermeasures from Black. The other main move, 6 e3, is less forcing and leads to a complex positional struggle.

6 ... e6

An introduction to a piece sacrifice. Nowadays 6...♘bd7 7 ♘xc4 ♕c7 8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 ♘xe5 10 ♗f4 ♘fd7!? has been revived, especially due to the efforts of Morozevich. For more detailed analysis of this line, see Van Wely-Morozevich, Elista OL 1998 (Game 37).

7 f3 ♗b4

Occasionally Black goes for 7...c5 8 e4 cxd4 9 exf5 ♘c6 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 ♕e2 (after 12 ♗xc4 dxc3, 13 ♕e2!? leads to the same position and is stronger than 13 bxc3; White needs open space for his bishops) 12...dxc3 13 ♕xe6+ ♕e7 14 ♗xc4 cxb2 15 ♗xb2 ♕xe6+ 16 ♗xe6 ♗b4+ 17 ♔e2 ♔e7 18 ♗c4. Although White's advantage is not so large, in practice Black's results have been appalling. Defending a permanently worse endgame with little or no counterplay is not an easy chore.

8 e4

The only way to fight for an advantage. It's well known that 8 ♘xc4 0-0 9 ♗g5 h6 10 ♗h4 c5 11 dxc5 ♕xd1+ 12 ♖xd1 ♗c2 13 ♖c1 ♗xa4! 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♖a1 ♗b3 16 ♘b6 ♘c6 gives Black splendid compensation for the exchange, while 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 c5 10 dxc5 ♕a5 11 ♕d4 ♘c6! doesn't pose any problems for Black either.

8 ... ♗xe4

9 fxe4 ♘xe4

10 ♗d2

If White wants, he can call it a day after 10 ♕f3 ♕xd4 11 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 12 ♗g5+ ♘xg5 (12...♔c8?! 13 ♕xe6+ ♘d7 14 ♕xd7+ ♕xd7 15 ♘xd7 ♘xc3 16 bxc3 ♗xc3+ 17 ♔d1 ♗xa1 18 ♘c5 is advantageous for White; Black's rooks are too passive) 13 ♕xg7 ♗xc3+ (more interesting, but hardly worth the trouble from Black's viewpoint, is the fighting continuation 13...♕e3+ 14 ♔d1 ♖f8 15 ♘xc4 ♕c5 16 h4 ♗xc3 17 ♕xg5+ ♕xg5 18 hxg5 ♗d4 19 ♔e1! ♖f7 20 ♗d3 ♘d7 21 ♖d1; now 21...♔e7?! {Tunik-Evseev, Russian Ch (Samara) 2000} 22 g6! ♖g7 23 gxh7 is good for White and even after the superior 21...♔c7 Black has at best equality) 14 bxc3 ♕xc3+ 15 ♔e2 ♕c2+ 16 ♔e1 ♕c3+ with a perpetual.

10 ... ♕xd4

11 ♘xe4 ♕xe4+

12 ♕e2 ♗xd2+

13 ♔xd2 ♕d5+

14 ♔c2 ♘a6

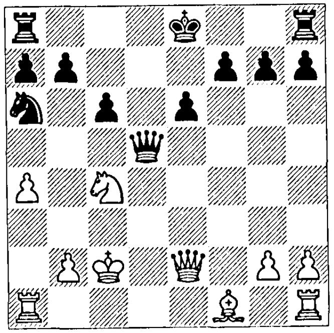
14...0-0?! is weaker due to 15 ♕e3!.

15 ♘xc4 *(D)*

15 ♕e1 f6 16 ♘xc4 0-0-0 17 ♕e3 transposes to a line (15 ♘xc4 0-0-0 16 ♕e5 f6 17 ♕e3) that is considered harmless for Black.

After the text-move we have reached the virtual starting point of the game. The whole 8 e4 variation was in oblivion until the late 1980s, when Karpov was the first to realize its potential. Although Black has three pawns for the bishop, he has no dangerous pawn phalanx that

B



could advance menacingly. And once White manages to coordinate his forces and safeguard his wandering king, the chances can well end up on his side.

15 ... b5?!

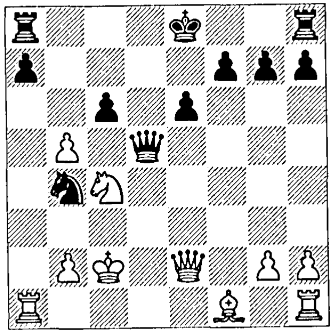
Other moves have been tested in practice and found wanting, such as 15...♕f5+ or 15...♔e7. At the time our game took place, the former main continuation 15...0-0-0 was in a crisis caused by Kramnik's excellent idea 16 ♕e3! ♘c5 (one of the points is that after 16...♔b8 17 ♗e2 ♕xg2 18 ♖hg1 ♕xh2 19 ♖xg7 ♘b4+ 20 ♔b3 ♘d5, contrary to the line mentioned in the note to White's 15th move, Black has not yet played ...f6 and so 21 ♕e5+ gives White a large advantage) 17 ♗e2 ♕xg2 18 ♖hg1 ♕xh2, when now 19 ♖xg7! is possible after all since 19...♖d3 (once erroneously considered to refute White's play) is well met by 20 ♖h1!. No matter how Black tries to untangle the mess, White emerges firmly on top. After a brief interlude with the text-move, Black started concentrating his efforts mainly on the solid 15...0-0, but in most recent practice White has been scoring well with 16 ♕e5 ♖ab8 17 a5!; e.g., 17...♖fd8 18 ♗e2 f6 19 ♕xd5 cxd5 20 ♘d2 ♖dc8+ 21 ♔b3 ♔f7 22 ♖hc1 ♔e7 23 ♔a3 ♘c5 24 b4 ♘d7 25 ♘b3 g6 26 a6 bxa6 27 ♘d4 and White is much better, Topalov-Khalifman, Istanbul OL 2000. Although Black's play can certainly be improved, he nevertheless remains the side fighting for equality.

16 axb5

The only move. 16 ♘e5? loses on the spot to 16...♘b4+ 17 ♔c1 ♕c5+ 18 ♔b1 ♖d8, when there is no defence against ...♕xe5. 16 ♘a5? ♘b4+ is also treacherous for White, as Black's attack is too strong after 17 ♔c1 (17 ♔c3? loses to 17...♕c5+ 18 ♔b3 ♘c2! 19 ♕xc2 bxa4+ 20 ♖xa4 ♖b8+) 17...♕c5+ 18 ♔b1 ♖d8 19 ♖a3 ♕f5+ 20 ♔c1 ♖d4.

16 ... ♘b4+ *(D)*

W



17 ♔c3

After 17 ♔b3 cxb5 18 ♔xb4 bxc4 19 ♕xc4 ♖b8+ 20 ♔a3 (20 ♔a4 ♕d6!? could even be dangerous for White) 20...♕a5+ 21 ♕a4+ a draw was agreed in Bareev-Khalifman, Ubeda 1997. Paradoxically, the organizers wanted to fine both players for their lack of fighting spirit. Khalifman's reaction is worth recording: "Those twenty minutes at the board cost me two weeks of work at home."

17 ... cxb5

17...♕c5 18 ♖a5!? doesn't give Black sufficient compensation.

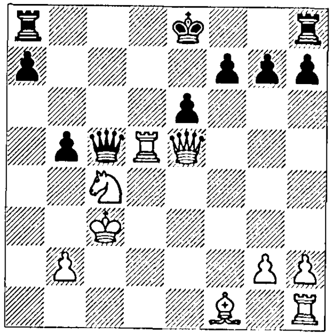
18 ♖d1!

This is the only principled continuation. A further way to split the point is 18 ♘b6 ♕c5+ 19 ♔b3 ♘c6! (19...♖b8? loses to 20 ♕xb5+ ♕c6 21 ♔xb4 ♖xb6 22 ♖c1! ♕d7 23 ♖c7!) 20 ♕xb5 ♕e3+ 21 ♔c2 (after 21 ♗d3? 0-0! Black wins material) 21...♕f2+ 22 ♔c3 (not 22 ♗e2? 0-0 23 ♕xc6 ♕xe2+ 24 ♔b1 ♕d3+) 22...♕d4+, Shirov-Khalifman, Ter Apel 1997.

18 ... bxc4

The queen sacrifice leads to an unconventional material balance, but it's not really forced. Black can play 18...♕c5 19 ♕e5 (White must exchange the queens; 19 ♕e3? is bad due to 19...♘d5+ 20 ♖xd5 ♕xd5) 19...♘d5+ 20 ♖xd5 *(D)* and now:

B



1) 20...♕xd5 21 ♘d6+ ♔f8 (21...♔e7 22 ♘f5+ ♔d8 23 ♕xd5+ exd5 24 ♗xb5 {or even 24 ♘xg7!?} suits White) 22 ♕xd5 exd5 23 ♗xb5 (23 ♘xb5!? ♖c8+ 24 ♔d2 ♖b8 25 b3 with good winning chances for White, is similar) 23...♖d8 24 ♖e1 g6 25 ♘b7 ♖c8+ (25...♖b8 is worse due to 26 ♗c6 ♖c8 27 ♘a5 ♔g7 28 ♔d4 ♖b8 29 ♘b7!) 26 ♔d2 ♔g7 27 b4 and after overcoming the temporary disharmony in his camp, White can concentrate his forces against Black's weak pawns.

2) A new chapter in the history of 15...b5?! was written recently: 20...b4+ 21 ♔b3 ♕xd5 22 ♗e2! (22 ♕xg7 ♔e7 23 ♗e2!?, with the idea that 23...♖ag8 is met by 24 ♕h6 ♕xg2 25 ♖a1, is possible, but far riskier) 22...0-0 23 ♕xd5 exd5 24 ♘a5 ♖fe8 25 ♗f3 ♖ac8 26 ♖d1 ♖e3+ 27 ♔a4!, Kramnik-Shirov, Linares 2000. Black's material advantage is only temporary and White has all the chances, as long as he manages to keep his precious b-pawn alive.

19 ♖xd5 ♘xd5+

20 ♔d2!

The greedy 20 ♔xc4 ♖b8! (20...0-0 is weaker since after 21 ♔b3! the king reaches a relatively safe haven) is not too promising for White. He is undeveloped and his exposed king is in danger; the least that can happen to him is the loss of his b-pawn after, for example, 21 ♕e5 0-0 22 ♔d3 ♖fd8 23 ♔d2 ♘b4+ 24 ♔e1 (24 ♔e2 ♘d3) 24...♘c2+ 25 ♔f2 ♘d4. Illescas was certainly inspired by the game Topalov-Anand, which took place a few days earlier in the same tournament. One can imagine White's shock when confronted with such an original idea; in that game a draw was agreed after 20 ♔c2 0-0 21 ♕e4 ♖fc8 22 h4 ♖c5 23 ♖h3 ♖ac8 24 ♖a3 a5 25 ♔c1 h5 26 ♕d4. Black can play 26...c3 27 b3 c2, when his fortress is really impregnable. Although even the later course of the stem game leaves some questions open, Salov chooses a different and more ambitious route for his king.

20 ... 0-0

20...♖b8? 21 ♕e5 ♖xb2+ 22 ♔c1 c3 23 ♕xg7 is hopeless for Black, but the more circumspect 20...♖c8 could have led to the game position, excluding any temptation to take on c4.

21 ♕e5

21 ♕xc4!? is a better version of the 20 ♔xc4 line above and deserves a second look:

1) 21...♖ab8 22 b3 ♖fc8 23 ♕d3! (23 ♕a4 ♘c3 24 ♕a6 ♘e4+ 25 ♔e3 ♘c5 and after the liquidation of the queenside Black continues to pester White's king) 23...♖d8 24 ♕f3 is not ideal for Black; White should be able to consolidate.

2) After 21...♖fd8 Black must reckon with 22 ♕h4!? (22 ♗d3 ♖ab8 threatens both ...♘b4 and ...♖xb2+) 22...♖ab8 (22...♘b4+ 23 ♔c1 ♖ac8+ 24 ♗c4 gets Black nowhere) 23 b3 and the bishop aims for c4.

21 ... ♖ac8

After 21...♖fd8? 22 ♗xc4 ♘b6+ 23 ♔c3 ♖ac8 24 b3 White retains his b-pawn.

22 ♗e2 ♖fd8

22...c3+ 23 bxc3 ♘xc3 was possible, but there is no hurry.

23 ♖c1 *(D)*

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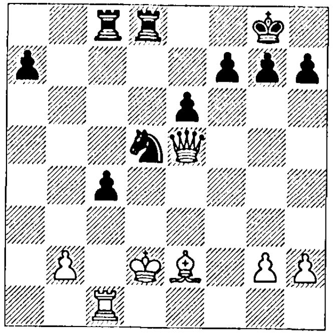
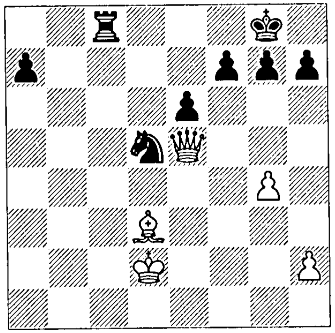


The adventurous opening is over and it's time to take stock. Black has a rook and three pawns for the queen and his solid position gives him chances to build a strong fortress. However, his active possibilities are zero and he must just sit and wait to see how White will try to breach his defences.

23 ... ♘b6+?!

Illescas puts too much trust in the strength of his stronghold on c4.

23...♘f4+? 24 ♔e3 ♘xg2+ 25 ♔f2 ♘h4 26 ♖xc4 is even worse, since after the exchange of rooks Black will quickly lose his a-pawn. However, better was 23...c3+ 24 bxc3 ♘xc3+ 25 ♗d3 (25 ♔e1? ♘xe2 26 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 27 ♔xe2 g6 is an exchange too many for White; if Black manages to get his rook to a protected square he will hold the position; e.g., 28 ♕d4 ♖b8 29 ♕d3 a6! 30 ♕xa6 ♖d8 and ...♖d5 or 28 ♕d6 ♖e8 29 ♔f3 e5 and ...♖e6) 25...♘d5 26 ♖xc8 (White can hardly avoid the exchange of rooks; 26 ♖b1 a5 is uncomfortable for him) 26...♖xc8 27 g4 *(D)*.



Although even here White has reasonably good chances to score the full point, the simplification has made things somewhat easier for the defence.

24 ♔e1

Salov hides his king on the opposite side of the board. On the kingside it won't become an object of attack and White can gradually improve his position by combining threats against Black's king and the c4-pawn. In a higher sense the game is probably already decided and although the realization can take 20-30 moves or more, Salov as an excellent technician was never the one to mind.

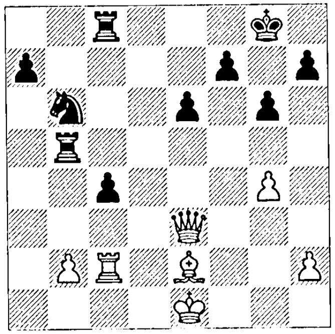
24 ... ♖d5

25 ♕e3 ♖b5

26 ♖c2 g6

Black can't achieve the pawn exchange advantageously any more (26...♘a4? 27 b3), but 26...h5!? was more resilient, although after 27 h3 White can prepare the advance of the g-pawn.

27 g4! *(D)*



Kingside expansion fits into White's plans.

27 ... ♖cc5

27...♖b3 is no better in view of 28 ♕e5, so Black has to mark time.

28 ♖d2

A very natural move, but now ...c3 gets on the programme again. White could have played 28 h4!? immediately.

28 ... ♘d5

Forced. 28...♖c8 29 h4 leaves Black too passive and 28...♖d5 29 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 (29...♘xd5 30 ♕d4) 30 ♕c3 ♖b5 31 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 32 ♕xc4 costs him a vital pawn, as 32...♖xb2? 33 ♕c8+ and ♕c3+ is even costlier.

29 ♕e5 ♖b3

30 h4 h6

Black justifiably rejects 30...c3 31 bxc3 ♖cxc3 32 h5 ♖e3 33 ♕d4 gxh5 34 gxh5 as too weakening and prevents White's pawn from marching to h6.

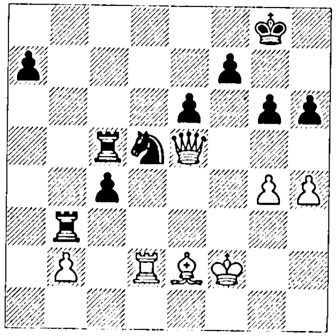
31 ♔f2 *(D)*

White is in no hurry to play anything as committal as 31 h5 g5 and intends to dislodge the knight with ♗f3.

31 ... a5?

This was Black's last chance to exchange the c-pawn. Although after 31...c3 32 bxc3 ♖cxc3 (32...♖bxc3 is somewhat weaker in view of 33 ♗f3 or 33 ♖b2) 33 ♖a2 White has made progress compared with the similar position in the note to Black's 23rd move, he will still have to work to haul in the point.

32 ♗f3 ♖d3



32...c3 (32...♖bb5 33 ♗e4 leaves Black totally tied up; White can prepare the final attack in peace) 33 bxc3 ♖bxc3 is insufficient. Then:

1) It's important understand the implications of 34 ♗xd5 exd5 35 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 36 ♕xd5. The a-pawn will fall shortly, so Black's hopes lie in building a kingside fortress. It would be really impregnable if he could right now play ...♖e6. However, this takes time and meanwhile White can get his king to the d-file, where it participates in dislodging the rook from e6. If Black plays ...g5 or ...h5, White answers with h5 or g5 respectively, retaining the possibility of reaching a won pawn endgame with a later ♕x(♖)e6! sacrifice.

2) More energetic is 34 ♗e4! ♖3c4 35 g5 with the idea that 35...h5 36 ♗xg6 ♖xh4 is met by 37 ♖xd5! ♖xd5 38 ♗xf7+! breaking down the defences.

33 ♖e2

33 ♖xd3 cxd3 34 ♕d4 ♖c2+ 35 ♔g3 would only prolong the game; White has attacking ambitions.

33 ... ♖b3

The rook returns, but it's too late. After 33...c3, 34 bxc3 ♖dxc3 35 ♗xd5 should win as in note '1' to Black's 32nd move, but 34 ♖c2 is even stronger, as Black loses the c-pawn (34...cxb2? 35 ♖xc5 b1♕ 36 ♖c8+).

34 ♕d6!

The decisive penetration; White's pieces suddenly cooperate ideally.

34 ... ♘b4

34...♖cb5 35 ♖xe6! or 34...♖bb5 35 ♗e4, planning not only ♗xg6, but also ♔g2 and ♖f2, doesn't help Black either.

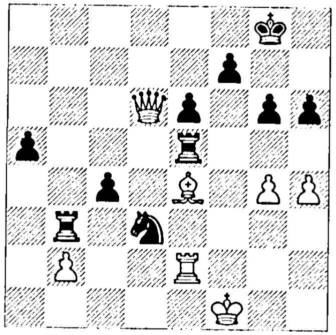
35 ♗e4 ♘d3+

35...♖c8? fails to 36 ♗xg6; this motif recurs until the end.

36 ♔f1

36 ♗xd3?! is weaker. Although 36...cxd3? loses immediately to 37 ♖xe6 ♖c2+ 38 ♔f3 ♖bxb2 (or 38...d2+ 39 ♔e2) 39 ♖c8+ ♔h7 40 ♕d4, Black could continue the struggle with 36...♖d5! 37 ♕c6 (37 ♗xc4 ♖xd6 38 ♗xb3 ♖d4 39 ♔f3 h5! gives Black good drawing chances) 37...♖bxd3 (37...cxd3? 38 ♖xe6) 38 ♕xc4 ♖h3.

36 ... ♖e5 *(D)*



37 ♕c7

Salov was short of time; he later pointed out the simpler win 37 ♕d8+ ♔g7 38 ♕d4 ♔g8 39 ♕xc4.

37 ... ♖c5

37...♖eb5 loses to 38 ♗xg6 fxg6 39 ♖xe6.

38 ♕d8+ ♔g7

38...♔h7 is hopeless due to 39 h5 with a mating attack.

39 ♕d4+

39 g5 was also possible, but the text-move doesn't significantly prolong Black's suffering.

39 ... e5

39...♔g8 gives White the choice between 40 ♕d8+ ♔g7 41 g5, transposing to the previous note, and 40 ♗xg6!?.

40 ♕d6 ♖bb5

40...♖cb5 41 g5 hxg5 42 hxg5 ♖b6 43 ♕c7 is similar; there is no defence against ♗xd3 and ♖f2.

41 ♗xd3

It's hardly fair to criticize a move that forces resignation, but even better was 41 ♕e7!? ♘f4 (41...♖c8 42 g5 h5 43 ♗xg6!) 42 ♖d2.

1-0

After 41...cxd3 (41...♖d5 loses to 42 ♕e7 cxd3 43 ♖f2) 42 ♖f2 ♖c1+ 43 ♔g2 Black can still struggle on with 43...♖b7, but understandably he was in no mood to let White demonstrate a simple technical win after, for example, 44 ♕xe5+ ♔g8 45 ♕xa5.

Summary

6 ♘e5 is a very concrete line, characterized by tactical complications and material imbalance. It demands energetic and often sacrificial countermeasures from Black. Slav devotees such as Kramnik and Shirov have invested many hours of homework in this variation and as their encounter from Linares 2000 shows, even this doesn't guarantee immunity from unpleasant surprises. Illescas decided to copy Anand's idea, but he hardly had any time to immerse himself into the position after 19...♘xd5+ in the course of the tournament. This gave Salov a welcome opportunity to achieve his dream position after the seemingly minor improvement 20 ♔d2!; Black must then conduct a thankless defence and be prepared for any of the numerous methods by which White can try to invade his position. This verdict is borne out by the fact 18...bxc4 has disappeared from tournament practice.

Black's further play after 23 ♖c1 showed that he didn't fully realize the difference between the respective positions of White's king. After ♔e1-f2 the concentration of forces on the queenside is ineffective and the potential vulnerability of the c4-pawn is just an extra worry. In this sense Black really should have played 23...c3+ or, later, 31...c3; when defending a fortress it usually helps to narrow down the theatre of action to one flank. Black's error on move 31 was already decisive; from 34 ♕d6! onwards White completely disrupted the coordination of Black's forces, wrapping the game up with a mating attack.

Game 27

Evgeny Bareev – Eduardas Rozentalis

European Team Championship, Pula 1997

English Opening [A13]

1 c4 e6
2 ♘c3 ♗b4

Rozentalis is an expert on the 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 line, which he plays regularly with Black. Until 1997 he often used the slightly extravagant text-move as a means to transpose into the above-mentioned variation. However, White has more ambitious tries at his disposal, and Bareev's next move is one of them.

3 ♕b3

Another attempt to refute Black's concept is 3 e4!?. Nearly two decades ago there were exciting developments in the line 3...c5 4 ♘b5 d6 5 a3 ♗a5 6 b4 a6. Later the agitation died down, as White can retain some edge even after the quiet 7 bxa5 axb5 8 cxb5 ♘f6 9 ♕c2 e5 10 ♗c4 ♕xa5 11 ♘e2 ♗e6 12 ♗xe6 fxe6 13 ♘c3 ♘bd7 14 0-0 d5 15 a4 0-0 16 d3, as in Serper-Raisky, Miedzybrodzie 1991. Rozentalis himself preferred 3...♘e7, when after 4 d4 d5 5 e5 c5 6 a3 an amazing transformation had taken place in Hodgson-Rozentalis, Rakvere 1993: we have a position from the Winawer French (!) with White's pawn on c4 instead of c2. After 6...♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♘bc6 8 ♘f3 0-0 9 ♗d3 h6 10 0-0 dxc4 11 ♗xc4 cxd4 12 cxd4 b6 13 ♕d3 ♗b7 14 ♗a2 ♘g6 15 d5!? ♘ce7 16 d6 ♗xf3 17 ♕xf3 ♘xe5 18 ♕g3 ♕xd6 19 ♗b2 f6 20 ♖ad1 White had good compensation for the sacrificed pawns.

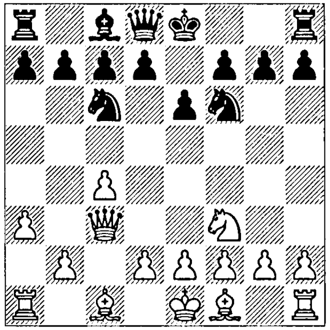
3 ... ♘c6

In the analogous line with the extra moves ♘f3 and ...♘f6, after 4 ♕b3 Black can protect his bishop with a pawn. Now 3...c5? doesn't work because of 4 ♘b5, when the main threat is ♕g3. 3...a5?! isn't ideal either and was severely punished by Kasparov: 4 a3 ♗xc3 5 ♕xc3 ♘f6 6 d4 0-0 7 ♗g5 d6 8 e3 ♕e7 9 ♗d3 e5 10 ♘e2! (having delayed the development of his knight, White can now deploy it more effectively) 10...♘c6 11 f3 h6 12 ♗h4 a4 13 0-0 ♗d7 14 ♖ae1 ♖fe8 15 ♕c2 ♘a5 16 ♘c3 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘b3 18 f4! and White already had a decisive attack in Kasparov-Rozentalis, Debrecen Echt 1992. Rozentalis has also tested 3...♗a5!? 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 d4 d5 6 ♗g5 dxc4, but maintains White is slightly better after 7 ♕xc4 ♕d5 8 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 9 ♗d2.

4 ♘f3 ♘f6
5 a3 ♗xc3

A tough decision: is the bishop-pair worth more than the tempo? Practical examples again stem mostly from Rozentalis himself. After 5...♗e7 6 d4 d5 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♗g5! 0-0 9 e3 ♘a5 10 ♕c2 ♗e6 11 ♗d3 h6 12 ♗f4 ♘c6 13 h3 ♗d6 14 ♘e2 ♖e8 (14...♘e7!? is better) 15 ♖c1 ♘e4 16 0-0 ♗xf4 17 ♘xf4 ♕d6 18 ♖fd1 White's advantage had an unpleasantly nagging character in Ehlvest-Rozentalis, Groningen PCA qualifier 1993. Also 5...♗c5 6 e3! e5 7 ♕c2 a5 8 b3 0-0 9 ♗b2 ♖e8 10 ♗d3 d6 11 ♘d5 h6 12 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 13 ♗h7+ ♔h8 14 ♗e4 ♘e7 15 d4 exd4 16 exd4 ♗f5 17 0-0 didn't fully solve Black's opening problems in Yermolinsky-Rozentalis, Krynica ECC 1997. This game was the final straw; the amiable Eduardas then got fed up and started playing 2...♘f6.

6 ♕xc3 *(D)*



6 ... d5?

This move doesn't fit into the position and is a rather serious strategic mistake. 6...d6 is more in keeping with the spirit of the chosen line. Now 7 g3 e5 8 ♗g2 ♕e7 is quite satisfactory for Black, but more ambitious is 7 d4!?, transposing into a comfortable line of the Nimzo-Indian. Bareev has good technique and probably Black was unwilling to submit himself to a prolonged positional massage after, for example, 7...♕e7 8 g3 e5 9 d5 ♘b8 10 ♗g2 0-0 11 0-0 c6 12 ♘h4 cxd5 13 cxd5 ♘a6 14 b4 ♗d7 15 e4 ♖fc8 16 ♕b3 ♖c7 17 ♗e3 ♖ac8 18 ♖ac1 ♕d8 19 ♕b2 b6 20 ♖xc7 ♘xc7 21 ♖c1 ♘ce8 22 f3 ♖xc1+ 23 ♕xc1 ♕c7 24 ♗f1 ♕xc1 25 ♗xc1 with a small but lasting edge, Illescas-Rozentalis, Groningen PCA qualifier 1993. However, now it will be considerably worse.

7 e3 0-0
8 b4!

This pinpoints the drawbacks of Black's 6th move. His bishop's prospects are bleak, while White wants to create a dangerous battery on the a1-h8 diagonal, whose gaze will penetrate Black's kingside.

8 ... ♘e4

8...♖e8 9 b5! (9 ♗b2 e5!? is unclear) 9...♘e7 10 ♗b2 is unpleasant for Black, but the text-move loses further tempi.

9 ♕c2 ♘g5

After 9...♗d7, 10 ♗d3! forces the ugly move 10...f5, when 11 ♗b2 leaves Black's position full of holes.

10 ♗b2 ♗d7

It's difficult to give Black good advice. The attempt to close the long dark-square diagonal with 10...♘xf3+ 11 gxf3 d4 offers White a pleasant choice: 12 b5 (12 ♗d3!? ♕h4 13 f4 is also promising) 12...♘e5 13 0-0-0!? (13 f4?! ♘f3+ 14 ♔e2 d3+! 15 ♕xd3 ♕xd3+ 16 ♔xd3 ♖d8+ 17 ♔e2 ♖xd2+ 18 ♔xf3 ♖xb2 19 ♖d1 ♔f8 and 13 ♗g2 c5 are unconvincing for White, but 13 ♕e4 dxe3 14 dxe3 deserves attention) 13...c5 (13...d3 14 ♕c3 f6 15 ♖g1! gives White a strong attack) 14 ♕e4 and White's bishops rule supreme.

11 cxd5

11 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 12 cxd5 ♕xd5 13 ♗d3 h6 14 0-0 (14 ♗e4?! is weaker due to 14...♕b5) gives White a clear advantage. However, Bareev is more ambitious and wants to attack Black's king.

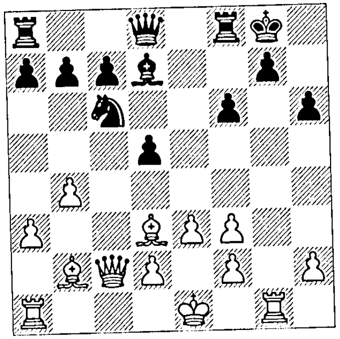
11 ... ♘xf3+

Opening the g-file for White is forced, since 11...exd5? loses a pawn for nothing: 12 ♘xg5 ♕xg5 13 b5.

12 gxf3 exd5
13 ♖g1 f6

13...d4 14 b5 ♘e5 15 ♕e4 costs Black material, while 13...g6 14 b5 ♘e7 15 ♗f6! is even less appealing for him. Now, however, White's light-squared bishop acquires extra scope.

14 ♗d3 h6 *(D)*



15 ♗h7+

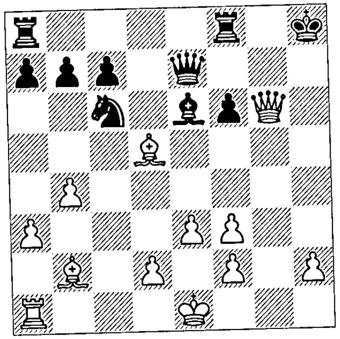
White has quickly outplayed his opponent and Black's defences would probably succumb even to a gradual increase of pressure after 15 0-0-0 or 15 ♖g3. Bareev chooses an attractive, but complicated, combinational solution.

15 ... ♔h8
16 ♖xg7! ♔xg7
17 ♕g6+ ♔h8
18 ♕xh6 ♕e7

18...♖f7? loses immediately to 19 ♗e4+ ♔g8 20 ♗xd5 with the decisive threats of ♕g6+ and ♗xf6.

19 ♗g6+

The alternative was 19 ♗e4+ ♔g8 20 ♗xd5+ (20 0-0-0!? ♕g7 21 ♗xd5+ ♖f7 22 ♕h4 ♔f8 is interesting, but far from clear) 20...♗e6 (not 20...♖f7? 21 0-0-0) 21 ♕g6+ (21 0-0-0 ♗xd5 22 ♖g1+ ♔f7 23 ♖g7+ ♔e8 24 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 leads to a similar material balance as later on in the game; here the difference is in Black's favour as his king is much better protected by the f6-pawn) 21...♔h8 *(D)* and now:



1) 22 ♕h5+ ♔g8! (after 22...♔g7? 23 0-0-0 ♖g8 24 ♖g1+ ♔f8 25 ♕h6+ White will continue the attack with a material advantage) 23 0-0-0 (23 ♔e2? ♖f7 24 ♖g1+ ♖g7 25 ♖g6 ♗xd5 26 ♗xf6 runs into 26...♘d4+! 27 ♗xd4 ♗xf3+! 28 ♔xf3 ♕f7+, but White can still transpose to line '2' with 23 ♕g6+) 23...♖f7 24 ♖g1+ ♖g7 and now:

1a) 25 ♖g6 ♕f7! (the threat was ♖h6 and Black has no tactics after 25...♗xd5? 26 ♗xf6; following 25...♖xg6 26 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 27 ♕h6+ White wins back a piece and although he is forced to exchange queens after 27...♕g7, he has excellent winning chances with the active bishop-pair) 26 ♗xe6 (26 ♗xf6? ♕xg6 27 ♗xe6+ ♔f8 28 ♕h8+ ♖g8 gets White nowhere) 26...♕xe6 27 ♗xf6 ♖xg6 28 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 29 ♕g7+ ♔e8 30 ♕h8+ ♔d7 31 ♕xa8 ♕xf6. The dust has settled and it's now White who has to be careful.

1b) Therefore the more modest 25 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 26 ♕g5+ ♔f7 27 ♕h5+, with a perpetual check, is indicated.

2) 22 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 23 0-0-0 ♕g8! (23...♕f7?! gives White the extra option 24 ♗xf6+! ♕xf6 25 ♕h5+) 24 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 25 ♕xf6+ ♕g7 26 ♕h4+ (after 26 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 White has four pawns for the piece, but they are doubled and isolated, giving Black good drawing chances) 26...♕h7 27 ♕f4 ♕g7 28 d4 ♖f8. White has managed to keep the queens on and is better, but the outcome of the game is still open.

Bareev's actual move is better, as he shuts the g-file for a moment to activate his rook without disturbance.

19 ... ♔g8
20 ♔e2!

The important difference between this move and 20 0-0-0 will become clear later on.

20 ... ♕g7

Forced, as 20...♖f7? loses on the spot to 21 ♖g1 ♖g7 22 ♗h7+.

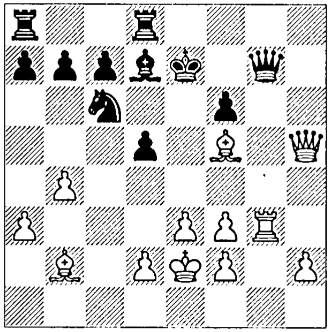
21 ♕h5 ♖fd8

White is attacking with all his pieces and Rozentalis again finds the only move – Black's king must leave the danger zone as soon as possible. 21...♕h8? 22 ♕xd5+ ♔g7 23 ♕xd7+ ♔xg6 24 ♖g1+ mates, while another way for Black to lose quickly is 21...♗e8 22 ♖g1 ♘e5 (22...♘e7 23 ♗h7+ ♔h8 24 ♕h4! is killing; this is the reason why White's king must be on e2 instead of c1) 23 ♗xe5 fxe5 24 ♖g3 and Black's rooks will be no match for White's queen with such an exposed king.

22 ♖g1 ♔f8
23 ♖g3 ♔e7

Escape is Black's only chance to survive. Weaker is 23...♘e5?! 24 ♗c2 ♗e8 (24...♕f7 25 ♕h6+ ♔e8 26 ♗xe5 is hopeless for Black) 25 ♕h4 ♘g6 (25...♗b5+ 26 ♔d1 ♘xf3 27 ♕f4 gives White an irresistible attack) 26 ♗xg6 ♗xg6 27 ♗xf6 ♕h7 28 ♗xd8, when White is simply three pawns up.

24 ♗f5 *(D)*



24 ... ♕f7

24...♕f8 25 ♗xf6+! doesn't change the issue. Now:

1) 25...♔d6? 26 ♖g6! is catastrophic for Black; he must take the bishop.

2) 25...♔xf6 26 ♕g5+ (26 ♖g6+ ♔e7 27 ♕h7+ ♔e8 28 ♖g8 ♗xf5 29 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 30 ♕xf5+ ♔e8 is unconvincing for White; he needs more pieces to support his pawns) 26...♔f7 (after 26...♔e5? 27 ♕g6! d4 28 f4+ ♔d5 29 ♗xd7 Black's king will be mated shortly) 27 ♕g6+ ♔e7 28 ♕h7+ ♕f7 (28...♔f6? 29 ♖g6+ ♔e5 30 f4+ ♔xf5 31 ♕h5+ ♔e4 32 d3#) leads to the game position.

3) The same goes for 25...♕xf6.

25 ♗xf6+!

This is the only way to keep the attack going. Now White regains part of the sacrificed material, giving rise to an unusual balance of forces.

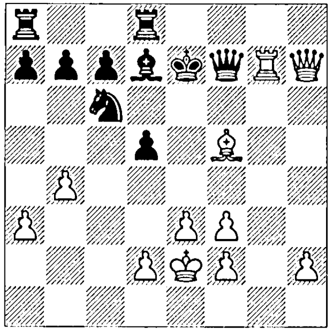
25 ... ♕xf6

Not 25...♔xf6? 26 ♕g5+ ♔e5 27 ♕f4+ ♔f6 28 ♗g6+.

26 ♕h7+ ♕f7

26...♔d6? 27 ♖g6 ♕xg6 28 ♕xg6+ ♔e7 29 ♕g7+ leads to mate.

27 ♖g7 *(D)*



27 ... ♗e8

Bareev points out 27...♘e5!? as the most resilient move. Nevertheless Black's task remains difficult enough:

1) 28 ♗g6 and now after 28...♕xg7 29 ♕xg7+ ♔d6 30 f4 (30 ♕f6+ ♗e6 31 ♗f5 ♖e8 32 h4 ♖e7 with the idea ...♘d7 and ...♖f8-f6 enables Black to disentangle his forces, but 30 ♗h7!? deserves attention) 30...♗b5+ 31 d3 ♘xg6 32 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 33 ♕g7+ ♔c6 34 ♕f6+ ♖d6 35 ♕c3+ ♔d7 36 ♕g7+ ♔c6 37 f5 the f-pawn will tie down both rooks. 28...♖f8 is more resilient, but here Black gets only another minor piece for his queen.

2) White can disrupt Black's piece coordination even further by playing 28 ♕h4+!? ♔f8 (28...♔e8? loses an important tempo: 29 ♖xf7 ♘xf7 30 ♗g6) 29 ♖xf7+ ♘xf7 (29...♔xf7? 30 ♕f4) 30 ♗g6 ♗e8 31 f4 ♖d6 (31...♘d6 32 ♕h8+ ♔e7 33 ♕g7+ ♗f7 34 f5, followed by h4-h5, leaves Black paralysed) 32 f5. White's plan seems slow, but is hard to meet: he intends ♕h7, followed by a combined advance of the h-pawn and even the e-pawn after d3 or f3.

28 ♗g6

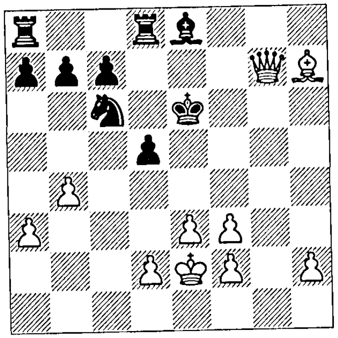
It's time to cash in. Having been a rook down, White sacrificed a piece, but now gets back the queen in return for another rook and has picked up three pawns along the way. Materially speaking, Black is quite OK, but his pieces are uncoordinated and his king remains unsafe. White has an ongoing attack and will soon turn even the material balance in his favour.

28 ... ♕xg7
29 ♕xg7+ ♔e6

Not 29...♔d6? 30 ♕f6+ ♔d7 31 ♗f5#.

30 ♗h7! *(D)*

B



White avoids exchanges and continues the king-hunt (compare also with the 30 ♗h7!? idea in note '1' to Black's 27th move).

30 ... ♘e7
31 f4 ♗b5+
32 d3 ♖f8
33 ♕e5+ ♔d7

Worse is 33...♔f7 34 f5 ♗d7 (34...♖ae8 35 f6 ♘c6 36 ♕xd5+ ♔xf6 37 ♕f5+! ♔g7 38 ♕g6+ ♔h8 39 ♕h6 loses for Black) 35 f6 ♘c6 36 ♕g5 and Black is forced to play 36...♖g8, when White has more than one way to win; e.g., 37 ♕xd5+ ♗e6 38 ♕h5+!? ♔xf6 39 ♕h4+ ♔g7 40 b5.

34 f5 ♖ae8

Black has somehow managed to connect his rooks, but it will cost him an exchange.

35 f6 ♘c8

Not 35...♘c6? 36 ♗f5+ ♔d8 37 ♕xd5#.

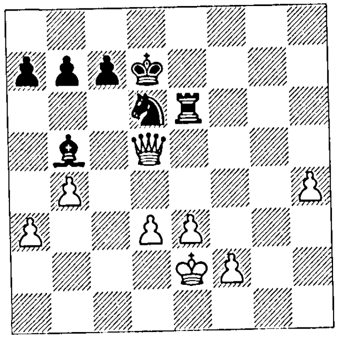
36 ♕xd5+ ♘d6
37 ♗g6 ♖e6

The epaulette mate after 37...♖d8? 38 ♗f5+ ♔e8 39 ♕e6# would certainly please White. Black's actual move is best, as 37...♖b8 38 ♕d4 ♔e6 39 f4! is hopeless. Once the avalanche of white pawns gets going, the game is over.

38 ♗f5 ♖fxf6
39 ♗xe6+ ♖xe6
40 h4 *(D)*

The last metamorphosis. Black has finally managed to beat off the attack and keep his material disadvantage within acceptable limits.

B



However, his forces still lack coordination and now White's pawns will have their say.

40 ... ♔e7

Black now loses another pawn, but this was difficult to avoid anyway. 40...♗c6 41 ♕g5 (41 ♕d4!?) 41...♘f7 42 ♕f4 ♘h6 43 ♕d4+ is similar to the text, and after 40...a6 41 h5 ♔c7 42 ♕g5+ ♖f6 43 f4 ♘f7 44 ♕h4 White's pawns start rolling while Black is unpinning his rook.

41 ♕c5 a6?!

Now White will have three connected passed pawns, but Black's predicament was unenviable even after the better 41...♗c6 (41...c6 42 ♕xa7, and then a4, strands Black's bishop) 42 ♕xa7.

42 ♕xc7+ ♔f6
43 ♕d8+ ♔f7
44 ♔d2 ♘f5
45 ♕c7+

Even the immediate 45 e4!? was possible, because 45...♖d6? loses to 46 ♕c7+ ♖d7 47 ♕f4 ♖xd3+ 48 ♔c2.

45 ... ♖e7
46 ♕f4 ♔e6
47 e4 ♘d4
48 ♕h6+ ♔d7

48...♔f7 49 ♕h7+ ♔e6 (49...♔f6? loses the knight after 50 ♕h8+ ♖g7 51 ♕d8+) 50 ♕g8+ ♖f7 51 h5 doesn't help Black.

49 ♕f6 1-0

The marching pawns are unstoppable.

Summary

Rozentalis's long experience with a slightly inferior line led him to try something new as early as move 6 in an attempt to change the character of the position. However, 6...d5? was an unfortunate novelty; Black probably didn't realize that White doesn't have to play d4 and transpose into a Nimzo-Indian or a Ragozin Queen's Gambit. To complement his c8-bishop Black should place his pawns on dark squares; therefore 6...d6 is a far better move. Another drawback of 6...d5? is the weakening of the dark squares, which is especially serious, as after 5...♗xc3 White's b2-bishop was unopposed on the long dark-square diagonal. The further course of the game shows how a weakness on squares of a certain colour can impair the whole position. White's pressure against g7 forced Black also to weaken his light squares (13...f6), which White exploited forcefully (15 ♗h7+, 17 ♕g6+), and finally exposed Black's king again via the dark squares (25 ♗xf6+!).

Another important moment of the game was White's choice after 14...h6. Bareev opted for a sharp tactical solution, but he himself modestly admits he overlooked 21...♖fd8. The winning combination thus involuntarily became a long-term positional sacrifice, its logical culmination being the aforementioned tactical blow on move 25. The king-hunt continued even afterwards, but by that point with an acceptable material balance for White. The decisive factor was Black's lacking piece coordination. For this reason 27...♘c5!? was the best chance – it would have kept Black's rooks connected, something he only achieved later at too high a price. In the final phase of the game the mobile queen and the passed pawns rendered Black resistance futile.

Game 28

Boris Gelfand – Garry Kasparov

Novgorod 1997

Queen's Indian Defence [E12]

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 e6
3 ♘f3 b6
4 a3 c5!?

This position certainly hasn't occurred too often in Kasparov's career from Black's side of the board. Here he chooses the most ambitious continuation, as he has a strong novelty up his sleeve in a line that was considered inferior. Later on, however, White came up with improvements of his own and restored the reputation of the whole variation as rather difficult for Black. The more usual alternatives are 4...♗a6 and 4...♗b7 5 ♘c3 (see Games 14 and 17).

5 d5

We have reached a Modern Benoni position with the extra moves a3 and ...b6. White's insertion is somewhat more to the point, as it slows down Black's normal queenside counterplay, and in some positions White can play b4 himself. Therefore Black's task is to find a set-up in which ...b6 will prove useful in creating counterchances. Kasparov is no stranger to such a situation, as many years ago he used to play the Benoni regularly.

5 ... ♗a6
6 ♕c2 exd5
7 cxd5 g6

It's not in Kasparov's nature to suffer for a pawn after 7...♗b7 8 e4 ♕e7 9 ♗d3 ♘xd5 10 0-0 ♘c7. White's most promising continuation is 11 ♗g5! f6 12 ♗f4 d6 13 ♘c3 ♘d7 14 b4! g5 15 ♗g3 ♘e5 16 bxc5 bxc5 17 ♗xe5 fxe5 18 ♕a4+ ♕d7 19 ♕b3 ♗c6 20 ♘xg5 ♗h6 21 ♘f3 with a clear advantage, Sakaev-Ruban, Russian Ch (Elista) 1995.

8 ♘c3

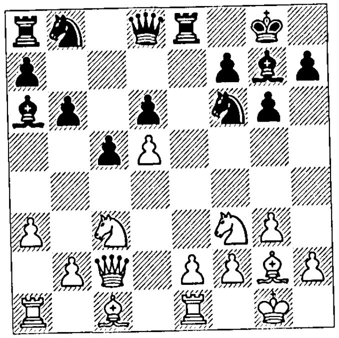
This move is played in most games without a second thought, but interesting is 8 ♗f4 d6 9 ♘bd2!? ♗g7 10 e4 ♗xf1 11 ♔xf1 0-0 12 ♘c4 ♘e8 (12...b5 13 ♘xd6 ♘h5 14 ♘b7 ♕b6 15 ♗xb8 ♖axb8 16 ♘xc5 ♖bc8 17 ♖c1 ♗h6 18 b4 is also good for White) 13 ♕b3 ♕e7 14 ♖e1 ♘d7 15 h4 and White was better in Krasenkov-Brynell, Malmö 1994.

8 ... ♗g7
9 g3 0-0
10 ♗g2 d6
11 0-0 ♖e8

The move-order Black uses to execute his plan has its significance, but at this moment 11...♘bd7 is an approximately equivalent continuation. White can try 12 ♗f4 (White's extra option 12 ♕a4 ♗b7 13 ♕h4 is no wonder weapon, as 13...♖e8 gives Black excellent counterplay after 14 e4 b5 or 14 ♗g5 ♕e7 followed by ...♕f8) 12...♕e7 13 ♖fe1, when 13...♖fe8 transposes to the note to White's 13th move, but Black can instead play 13...h6!?. Then 14 ♕a4 ♗b7 15 ♘b5 ♘e8 makes little sense for White, and 14 e4 is well met by 14...♘g4.

12 ♖e1 *(D)*

B



12 ... ♘bd7

This gives White a very promising tactical possibility. However, one can hardly blame Kasparov, as it is well hidden and became known only afterwards. Of the other tested possibilities, the most consistent is 12...b5 with a possible ...b4 in the air. Now:

1) The radical 13 b4 ♘bd7 14 ♗b2 ♖c8 15 ♕b3 ♘b6 creates weaknesses on the c-file and gives Black enough counterplay.

2) More testing is 13 ♗f4 b4 (after 13...♕b6 14 e4 ♘bd7, 15 h3 transposes to note '1' to White's 14th move; White can also do without the prophylaxis and play 15 ♗h3!? with an edge) 14 axb4 cxb4 15 ♘a4 ♘xd5 16 ♕b3 ♘xf4 17 gxf4 with a dangerous initiative; e.g., 17...d5 (17...♗b7 is worse because of 18 ♘e5! ♗xg2 19 ♘xf7) 18 ♘e5! ♗xe5 19 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♗xf4 21 e3 ♗xh2+ 22 ♔xh2 ♘d7 23 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 24 ♖ec1 and White is better.

3) White also has 13 e4, when there are various transpositional possibilities. Here 13...b4?! 14 axb4 cxb4 15 ♘a4 b3 16 ♕b1 is also far from ideal for Black. White's a1-rook is not passive and the advance of the b-pawn has weakened Black's queenside.

13 h3?!

Prophylaxis: White prevents ...♘g4, and thus is fighting for the e5-square. On the other hand, the text-move is time-consuming and reduces White's chances to emerge from the opening with an advantage. At the time this game was played, the direct 13 ♗f4 was considered harmless since after 13...♕e7, neither 14 h3 ♘e4! nor 14 e4 ♘g4 15 ♗g5 f6 16 ♗f4 ♘ge5 is a problem for Black. However, White has the more ambitious idea 14 ♕a4! ♗b7 15 ♘b5, and now:

1) 15...♘e4? runs into a piece of analysis by Yusupov and Dvoretsky: 16 ♘d2! ♘xd2 17 ♘xd6 ♗xb2 18 ♖ad1 and no matter how Black wriggles, he will lose material without much compensation; e.g., 18...g5 (after 18...♘f6 19 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 20 ♕c2 ♘de4 21 ♕xb2 ♘xd5 22 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 23 f3 Black loses a piece) 19 ♘xe8 gxf4 20 d6 ♕xe8 21 ♗xb7 ♖d8 22 ♖xd2 ♗c3 23 ♕xf4 with a material and positional advantage for White.

2) 15...♘xd5 is better:

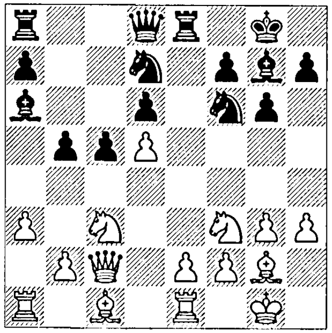
2a) 16 ♗xd6 ♕d8 (16...♕f6 17 e4 ♗c6! 18 exd5 ♗xb5 19 ♕xb5 ♕xd6 20 ♕c6 ♗f8 is a safe alternative) 17 e4 a6!? 18 exd5 ♖xe1+ 19 ♖xe1 axb5 20 ♕xb5 ♗xd5 21 ♘g5! ♖a5 (21...♗xg2 is weaker due to 22 ♘xf7! ♕f6 23 ♕xd7 ♕xf7 24 ♖e7; 21...♕xg5 22 ♕xd7 ♕d8 23 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 24 ♗c7 ♖c8 25 ♗xd5 ♖xc7 26 ♖e8+ ♗f8 27 ♖b8 ♖d7 28 ♗c4 leads to an unpleasant endgame for Black) 22 ♗xd5 ♖xb5 23 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 24 ♖e8+ ♕xe8 25 ♗xe8 ♖xb2 26 ♗xd7 c4 gives Black sufficient counterplay to hold the game.

2b) 16 ♘xd6!? ♗xb2 (16...♘xf4 17 ♕xf4 ♗xf3 18 ♗xf3! ♗e5 19 ♕d2 ♕xd6 20 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 21 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 22 ♖ad1 ♗e5 23 ♖xd7 ♗xb2 24 ♖b1! ♗f6 25 e4 gives White excellent winning chances) was Riazantsev-Mitenkov, Moscow 1998. Now White should have played 17 ♖ab1! ♘xf4 (after 17...♘c3 18 ♕b3 ♘xb1 19 ♕xb2 ♗xf3 20 ♘xe8, the b1-knight is trapped) 18 ♕xf4 ♗xf3 19 ♘xe8 ♗xg2 20 ♖xb2 ♗c6 21 ♘d6. Again White has an extra exchange and all the chances, although the game is not decided yet.

13 ... b5 *(D)*

This is best; 13...♘e5?! 14 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 15 e4 ♖e7 16 ♗e3 gives White a free hand in the centre.

W



14 e4

This allows Kasparov to demonstrate his idea. Just as above, 14 ♗f4! was preferable:

1) 14...♕b6 15 e4 ♖ac8 16 ♗e3 ♗b7 17 ♘d2 a6 18 a4 b4 19 ♘c4 ♕c7 20 ♘b1 ♘e5 21 ♘bd2 ♘fd7 22 a5 ♘xc4 23 ♘xc4 ♘e5 24 ♘b6 is a typical example of White's strategy, Bacrot-Emms, Escaldes Z 1998. He has limited Black's queenside activity and starts to dictate the play in the centre.

2) 14...♘b6 15 e4 ♕d7 16 g4!? (16 ♗f1 ♘h5 17 ♗g5 b4 18 ♗xa6 bxc3 19 bxc3 ♕xh3 is unclear) 16...♖ac8 17 ♗g3 ♗b7 was Gabriel-Marin, Romanian Cht 1998. Now 18 a4!? b4 19 ♘b5 is a possible improvement, giving White chances for an advantage.

3) The most interesting continuation is 14...♘h5!? 15 ♗xd6 ♕b6 16 ♗f4 ♘xf4 17 gxf4 ♖ac8 18 e3 c4 19 e4 ♗h6 20 ♘g5 ♘e5 21 fxe5 ♗xg5 22 d6 ♖xe5 23 d7 ♖d8 24 ♘d5, Khenkin-Chernin, Stockholm Rilton Cup 1997/8. Here 24...♕c5!?, with the point 25 b4 ♕d6 26 f4 ♖xd5 27 exd5 ♕xf4, would have given Black more than enough for the exchange.

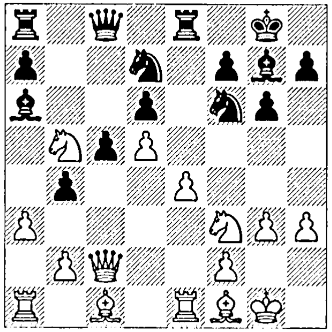
14 ... ♕c8!

An important novelty, which gives Black's counterplay a flying start. The previously used lines, 14...♖c8 15 ♗e3 (15 ♗f4!?) 15...♕c7 16 ♗f1 ♕b7 17 ♗f4 and 14...♕b6 15 ♗e3 ♖ac8 16 ♗f1 with the same position, make it difficult for Black to get in the desired ...b4.

15 ♗f4

Although Black's last move was designed especially against this logical continuation, it's nevertheless White's best. The main alternative is 15 ♗f1 (15 a4? b4 16 ♘b5 ♕b8 17 ♗f4 ♗f8 18 ♘d2 ♘h5 leaves the b5-knight out on a limb) 15...b4 16 ♘b5 *(D)* (16 axb4? is out of the question due to 16...♗xf1; 16 ♗xa6?! ♕xa6 17 ♘b1 c4 gives Black a clear advantage), and now:

B



1) 16...b3?! 17 ♕xb3 ♗xb5 (17...♘xe4? 18 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 19 ♘xd6 and 17...♖b8 18 ♕a4 are even worse for Black) 18 ♗xb5 ♖xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 20 ♗c6 ♖b8 21 ♕a4 ♘df6 22 ♕xa7 and the a-pawn is potentially dangerous.

2) 16...♗xb5 17 ♗xb5 ♖b8 18 a4 (18 ♗c6!? b3 19 ♕d3 seems better) 18...b3 19 ♕b1 a6 20 ♗c4 ♖b4 21 ♕d3 ♘b6 22 ♗xa6 ♕xh3 23 a5 ♘bd7 24 ♗d2 and although here Black has a lot of play, he must again look out for White's passed pawn, Lauber-Yu Shaoteng, Gyula 2000.

3) The simplest is 16...♕b8:

3a) 17 ♘c7?! b3! 18 ♕b1 (after 18 ♘xa6 bxc2 19 ♘xb8 ♖axb8 20 ♗d3 ♖b3 21 ♖e3 ♘xd5! 22 ♗xc2 ♖xb2! Black wins a pawn) 18...♕xc7 19 ♗xa6 ♘xd5 (19...c4 is less convincing due to 20 ♗b5) 20 ♗c4 (20 exd5? ♖xe1+ 21 ♘xe1 ♕a5) 20...♘5b6 21 ♗xb3 c4 and Black's forces are better developed and very active.

3b) 17 ♕a4 ♗b7 (17...♗c8 is worse, since after 18 ♗f4, 18...♘xe4? isn't possible any more in view of 19 ♘xd6) 18 ♗f4!? (18 axb4 ♖xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 20 bxc5 ♘exc5 21 ♕d1 a6 is good for Black, as the d5-pawn is vulnerable) is a more complicated continuation, where Black has several options:

3b1) 18...♗f8 19 axb4 ♘xe4 (19...♖xe4 20 ♖xe4 ♘xe4 21 bxc5 ♘exc5 22 ♕a2 can be better only for White) 20 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 21 ♕xd7 ♗xf4 22 gxf4 ♖d8 (22...♕xf4 23 ♖xe4!? ♕xe4 24 ♖e1 ♕xf3 25 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 26 ♕xe8+ ♔g7

27 ♗g2 ♕d1+ 28 ♔h2 ♕d4 29 ♕e3! and the d-pawn is a powerhouse) 23 ♕e7 ♖e8 24 ♕h4 (24 ♕d7 leads to a repetition) 24...♗xd5 25 ♘g5 ♘xg5 26 ♕xg5 ♗e4 is about equal.

3b2) 18...♘xe4 19 ♘xd6 (19 axb4 ♗xd5 20 ♘xd6 ♘xd6 21 ♕xd7 ♖d8 22 ♗xd6 ♖xd7 23 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 favours Black) 19...♘xd6 20 ♕xd7 ♖d8 21 ♕e7 ♗xd5 (21...♗f8 22 ♕e5 ♗g7 only repeats moves; 21...♗xb2 22 ♖ad1 can be even dangerous for Black, since his king is deserted and ideas like ♘g5 are in the air) 22 ♖ad1 (22 axb4? ♗xf3 23 bxc5 ♘f5) 22...♗xf3 23 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 (23...♕c8? loses to 24 ♕xf7+!! ♔xf7 25 ♗c4+ ♔f6 26 ♗e7+ ♔f5 27 ♖xd8) 24 ♖xd6 ♗f8 25 ♕f6 ♕xd6 26 ♕xf3 and ♗c4 gives White enough for the pawn to hold the balance.

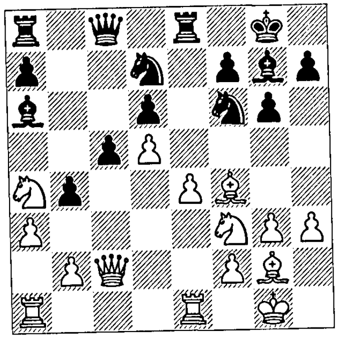
3b3) 18...♖xe4!? 19 ♖xe4 (the natural 19 ♗xd6 loses the d-pawn to 19...♕d8! 20 ♗c7 ♖xe1 21 ♖xe1 ♕c8 or 21...♘b6!?) 19...♘xe4 20 ♘xd6 (after 20 axb4 ♗xb2 21 ♖d1 ♗e5! 22 ♗xe5 dxe5 White doesn't have full compensation) 20...♘b6 21 ♘xe4 (21 ♘xb7 ♘xa4 22 ♗xb8 ♗xb2 23 ♗e5 ♗xa1 24 ♗xa1 ♖b8 is close to winning for Black) 21...♕xf4! (now 21...♘xa4?! 22 ♗xb8 ♗xb2 23 ♗e5 ♗xa1 24 ♗xa1 is at best unclear) 22 gxf4 ♘xa4 23 axb4 ♗xd5 24 ♖xa4 ♗xe4 25 ♘e1 (25 ♘e5? ♗c2). Black is better, but White still should be able to save the game.

After the text-move, White's prospects are not so bleak.

15 ... b4

16 ♘a4 *(D)*

16 ♘d1 b3 17 ♕b1 ♕c7 18 ♘c3 ♘h5 19 ♗d2 ♘b6 20 g4 ♘f6 21 ♗f4 ♘fd7 22 ♕c1 c4! 23 ♕d2 ♘c5 24 e5 ♘d3 25 exd6 ♕d7 is good for Black, Palus-Stohl, Polish Cht 1998.



16 ... b3!?

With this tactical shot, typical for modern openings, Black fights for the centre from the flank. A quiet continuation, proposed by Kasparov, is 16...♗b5 17 axb4 (other moves clearly favour Black; e.g., after 17 ♘d2 ♘h5! 18 ♗xd6 ♕a6 19 ♗xc5 b3! he wins a piece advantageously; or 17 ♗xd6 ♗xa4 18 ♕xa4 ♘xe4) 17...cxb4, when White must avoid the exchange of queens, because otherwise his centre breaks up:

1) 18 ♘d4?! ♕xc2 19 ♘xc2 ♗xa4 20 ♖xa4 b3 and ...♘c5 or ...♘xd5 is very favourable for Black.

2) 18 ♕xc8 ♖axc8 19 ♗xd6 ♘xe4 and Black is much better, as 20 ♗xb4? loses a piece to 20...♖c4.

3) Therefore 18 ♕b1 is necessary. 18...♕b8! (18...a5? loses practically by force to 19 ♗xd6 ♕a6 20 e5 ♘xd5 21 ♘g5!; e.g., 21...♗c6 22 ♕d1 ♕b5 23 ♖c1 ♘e7 24 ♕b3 ♗d5 25 ♘c3! ♗xb3 26 ♘xb5 nets White at least an exchange) 19 ♘d4 (White must act, since otherwise the misplaced a4-knight will cause him trouble after 19 ♘d2 ♘h5 20 ♗e3 ♘e5 or 19 ♕c2 a5!?) 19...♘xd5 (White is slightly better after 19...♗xa4 20 ♖xa4 ♘xd5 21 exd5 ♗xd4 22 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 23 ♖xb4) 20 ♗xd6 (20 exd5?! ♗xd4 21 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 22 ♗xd6 ♕e2 23 ♕f1 ♖e8 threatens ...♕c2 and is very pleasant for Black) 20...♕xd6 21 ♘xb5 ♕b8 and now:

3a) 22 ♘xa7? ♘e7 traps the knight.

3b) 22 ♕d1 ♕xb5 (after 22...a6 23 ♘d4 ♘e7, 24 e5?! ♘xe5! 25 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 26 f4 ♘f5 27 fxe5 ♕a7 gives Black excellent compensation, but the less greedy 24 ♘e6! is better for White) 23 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 24 exd5 ♔f8 is approximately equal.

3c) The same goes for 22 exd5 ♕xb5 23 ♕c2!?. Although White's knight remains passive, the rest of his forces cooperate well enough to give him sufficient play.

17 ♕xb3

Even now 17 ♕b1?! is suspect. It would certainly be the right move if the rook were already on d1, but here White's army lacks harmony. After 17...♕c7 18 ♘d2 (for 18 ♘c3 see the note to White's 16th move) 18...♘h5 (18...♖ab8!?) 19 ♗e3 ♕a5 20 ♘c3 ♗xc3 21 bxc3 ♖ab8 Black's queenside play is more effective.

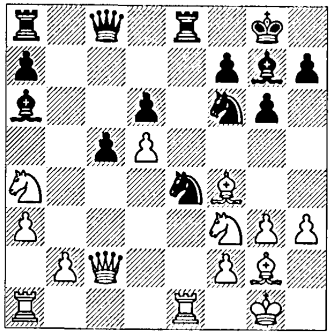
17 ... ♘xe4

18 ♕c2

After 18 ♘c3? ♖b8 19 ♕a4 (19 ♕c2 ♖xb2!) 19...♘xc3 20 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 21 bxc3 ♗xc3 22 ♗xd6 ♗b5 23 ♕d1 ♖b6 24 ♖b1 ♗e2 25 ♕c1 ♖xd6 Black wins a pawn, so the knight must remain on the edge for a while.

18 ... ♘df6 *(D)*

Black has broken up White's centre and occupied it himself, and all his pieces are very active. However, the e4-knight is also exposed and the text-move required sharp calculation of the resulting complications. Instead, 18...f5 19 ♘c3 (19 ♘d2 ♘xd2 20 ♕xd2 ♘e5 is OK for Black) 19...♖b8 20 ♖ab1!? (20 ♖ac1 ♘df6 21 ♘d2 ♕d7 is unclear) 20...♘df6 21 ♘d2 can favour only White. Black's kingside and d6-pawn are weak and, compared with the later course of the game, the f4-bishop is very much alive.



19 g4!?

Gelfand ambitiously attempts to undermine Black's central outpost. White had other tries with the same idea:

1) The artificial 19 ♘h2 ♕f5 20 f3? is weak due to 20...♘xg3!.

2) More testing is 19 ♘h4 g5 20 ♗xe4 gxf4 (20...gxh4 21 ♗f5 ♕c7 22 ♘c3 is promising for White; Black's kingside is shaky) 21 ♘f5 (21 g4 ♘xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♗e5 is difficult to assess unequivocally; the e5-bishop is strong and if Black can coordinate the rest of his forces, he has little to fear; e.g., 23 ♖ae1 ♕d8 24 ♘f3 f6 25 ♘c3 ♗c8) 21...♘xe4 (21...fxg3 22 fxg3 ♖e5 23 g4 ♕c7 24 ♗d3! and after the exchange of the a6-bishop, White's f5-knight will be too strong) 22 ♖xe4 ♗e5 with complicated play. If he wants, White can bail out by 23 ♘h6+ ♔g7 24 gxf4 ♔xh6 25 fxe5 ♕xh3 26 ♕d2+ ♔h5! 27 ♕d1+ with a perpetual.

3) This brings us to the solid 19 ♘d2 ♘xd2 20 ♕xd2 ♕d7 21 ♘c3 ♖ab8 (21...♖xe1+ 22 ♖xe1 ♖b8 23 ♗g5! is also about equal) 22 ♖xe8+ ♘xe8 23 b4 with a balanced and rather sterile position.

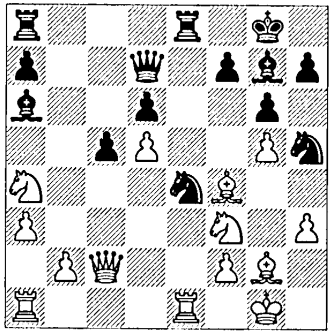
19 ... ♕d7

Good, but more or less forced. After 19...h6? 20 ♘h2 White loses either the knight or the important d6-pawn, while 19...♗b5 20 g5 ♘h5 (20...♕a6 21 gxf6 ♗xa4 22 b3 ♘xf6 23 bxa4 and White's material advantage should decide after 23...♘xd5 24 ♗f1! or 23...♘h5 24 ♗d2) 21 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 22 ♕xe4 ♕a6 23 ♘xc5 dxc5 24 ♘e5 (24 ♗e5!?) 24...♖c8 25 ♗h2 gave White a large advantage in Comas Fabrego-Röder, Barbera 1997.

20 g5

Consistent, 'solid' moves such as 20 ♘g5?! ♘xg5 21 ♗xg5 h5! or 20 ♘d2 ♘xd2 21 ♗xd2 ♖ab8 permit Black some advantage.

20 ... ♘h5 *(D)*



21 ♗h2

While this move can hardly be called a direct error, it starts tipping the scales in Black's favour. It is more natural to play 21 ♖xe4 ♖xe4, and now:

1) 22 ♕xe4 ♖e8 23 ♘xc5 (forced; White loses material after 23 ♘e5 ♗xe5 24 ♘xc5 ♕c8 25 ♘xa6 ♗xb2 or 23 ♗e5 ♗xe5 24 ♘xc5 ♕b5!? 25 ♘xa6 ♗h2+) 23...♖xe4 24 ♘xd7 ♖xf4! (24...♘xf4 25 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 26 gxf6 is OK for White). Black will regain the pawn and White has to fight for a draw.

2) 22 ♘xc5! is better:

2a) 22...♖c4 23 ♕xc4 ♗xc4 24 ♘xd7 ♘xf4 25 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 26 gxf6 ♗xd5 27 ♖d1. Again the f6-pawn is a thorn in Black's flesh. White plans ♔h2 and ♖d4 or ♘e1 and there is hardly any constructive way for Black to uphold his flagging initiative.

2b) 22...dxc5 23 ♕xe4 ♖e8 (23...♘xf4 is less convincing due to 24 ♕xf4 ♖e8 25 ♖e1) 24 ♗e5 f6 25 gxf6 ♘xf6 26 ♕c2 ♕xd5 27 ♖d1 ♕c4 with approximate equality.

21 ... f5

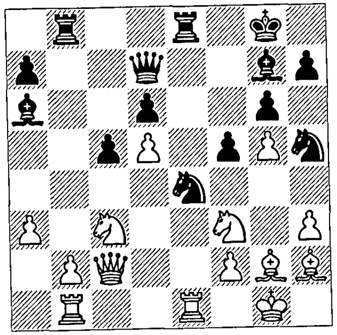
22 ♘c3?!

Black has fortified his knight, while White's kingside is weak. This requires action, so Gelfand should have, come what may, gone for 22 gxf6 ♘hxf6 (22...♘exf6 23 ♘g5 gains access to e6 with a murky position) 23 ♘e5! ♕f5 (23...dxe5 24 ♗xe4 ♕xh3 {or 24...♘xe4 25 ♕xe4} 25 ♘xc5 breaks up Black's centre and looks OK for White) 24 ♗xe4 (24 ♖xe4 ♘xe4!? 25 ♗xe4 ♕xh3 26 ♗g2 ♕h5 is a risky continuation for White) 24...♘xe4 25 ♕xe4 ♗xe5 26 ♕xf5 ♗xh2+ 27 ♔xh2 gxf5 with an equal endgame.

22 ... ♖ab8

23 ♖ab1? *(D)*

Mistakes rarely come alone; this is a tactical oversight. 23 ♘xe4 ♖xe4! (23...♖xb2? 24 ♘xc5 ♖xe1+ 25 ♖xe1 ♕c8 26 ♕c1 hands over the advantage to White; 23...fxe4 24 ♖xe4 ♖xb2 25 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 26 ♖e1! ♕f7 is at most slightly better for Black after 27 ♕e4 ♗f8 or 27 ♕c1!? ♖b6) 24 ♖ab1 (24 ♖xe4? ♖xb2 25 ♕a4 ♗b5) 24...♖xe1+ 25 ♘xe1 f4 was the lesser evil, although Black has a distinct pull.



23 ... ♗xc3?!

Kasparov's strategy is to retain the tremendous knight on e4 and hem in White's bishops. However, he surprisingly underestimates the welcome tactical opportunity 23...♖xb2! 24 ♖xb2 ♗xc3 25 ♖xe4 fxe4 26 ♕xc3 exf3 27 ♗xf3 ♕xh3 28 ♗xd6 (the only defence against ...♖f8) 28...♗e2! 29 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 30 ♗xc5 (30 ♗c7 ♖e7 31 d6 ♖f7 32 ♕b3 ♕xf3 33 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 34 d7 ♖d3 gives Black a won endgame) 30...♖e4! 31 ♗b4 ♖f4 32 ♗g2 ♕xc3 33 ♗xc3 ♖c4 (or 33...♖g4!?). Although the position can't yet be described as technically won, Black has very real chances to convert his advantage into victory. In the game, it will be much more difficult.

24 bxc3 ♖xb1

It's important to divert the rook from the e-file, since after 24...♗c4? 25 ♖xb8! ♖xb8 26 ♘d2 ♘xd2 (or 26...♗xd5 27 ♕d3) 27 ♕xd2 it is Black who must be careful, as White's h2-bishop is very much alive.

25 ♖xb1 ♗c4

25...f4?! 26 c4! (26 ♖e1? ♘xg5) cuts off Black's bishop and there is no way back for the centralized knight.

26 ♘d2

White does his best. 26 ♖d1 f4 leaves him too passive and after 26 ♖e1 ♗xd5 (26...♘xg5 27 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 28 ♗xd6 ♘e4 29 ♗e5 ♗xd5 30 c4 ♗c6 31 ♗a1 ♘d6 32 ♕c3 ♘f7 is less impressive, although here Black should also gradually win) 27 ♘d2 ♗c6 28 ♘xe4 fxe4 29 c4 (29 ♗xe4? d5) 29...♘g7 Black's knight joins in via or f5 or e6, because 30 ♗xe4? loses on the spot to 30...♖xe4 31 ♖xe4 ♕f5.

26 ... ♘xd2

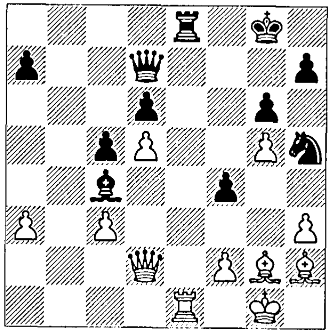
26...♗xd5 27 ♕d3 gives White too much counterplay, so Black ignores the pawn and continues his containment strategy.

27 ♕xd2 f4!

27...♖e2 28 ♕c1 gets Black nowhere, as the rook will have to retreat shortly.

28 ♖e1 *(D)*

28 ♗xf4? loses to 28...♕f5, while after 28 ♗f3 the simplest road to victory is 28...♕xh3! 29 ♗xh5 ♕f5. Another futile try is 28 h4 ♕g4 29 ♖e1 (after 29 ♕d1, 29...♗e2 30 ♕a4 ♖e7 stops any counterplay) 29...♖b8 (29...♖f8!? 30 ♖e4 ♗b3 is also good enough) 30 ♕d1 ♕xh4 31 ♕a4 ♕xg5!, when Black has an escape hatch on h6 to avoid the perpetual.



28 ... ♖e5!?

Black holds on to the crucial f4-pawn with all his might. He wouldn't be able to retain it after 28...♖xe1+ (28...♖f8? 29 ♖e4) 29 ♕xe1.

29 ♖e4?

After this major mistake in time-trouble, any possible resistance is curtailed. White had two better options:

1) Kasparov recommended 29 ♖xe5 dxe5 30 d6 (Gelfand's idea 30 ♕e1!? can't be dismissed so lightly either; after, for example, 30...♕e7 31 ♕e4 ♗b5 32 h4 ♗d7 33 ♗f3 ♗f5 34 ♕c4 ♕d6 35 ♗xh5 gxh5 36 f3 White activates his bishop just in time) with the threat ♗d5+:

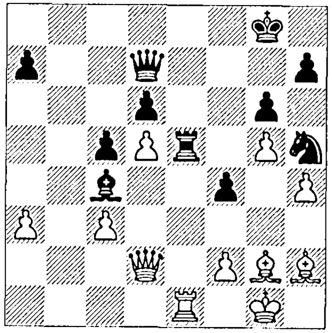
1a) 30...♔f8 31 ♗c6! (other moves allow Black to activate his knight and blockade the passed pawn with his king) 31...♕xh3 32 ♕d1 ♕d3 (after 32...♗d3 33 d7 ♔e7 34 c4! ♕f5 35 f3, the threat ♗e4 wins a piece, because Black can't play 35...♔d8? due to 36 ♕e1) 33 ♕xd3 ♗xd3 34 f3 ♘g7 35 ♔g2! (35 ♔f2 is weak in view of 35...♘e6) 35...♘f5 36 ♗g1 ♘e3+ 37 ♔f2 ♔f7 38 ♔e1 ♔e6 39 d7 ♔e7 40 ♔d2 ♗f5 41 ♗xe3 fxe3+ 42 ♔xe3 ♗xd7 43 ♗xd7 ♔xd7 44 ♔e4 ♔d6 45 c4 ♔e6 46 f4 exf4 47 ♔xf4 and White draws – an impressive line by Kasparov!

1b) More testing is 30...♗e6 31 ♔h1, and now:

1b1) 31...♘g7 32 ♗g1 (32 f3 will come to the same thing, since 32...♕c6 33 ♗g1 ♗d7 34 ♕d3 ♘e6 35 h4 is hardly an improvement for Black) 32...♘f5 33 f3 ♕c6 (33...♘h4 34 ♕f2 ♘xg2 35 ♔xg2 ♗xh3+ 36 ♔h2 is fine for White) 34 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 35 d7 ♗xd7 36 ♕xd7. Although White has no direct perpetual, Black can't improve his position without allowing one; e.g., 36...♕xa3 37 ♕e8+ ♔g7 38 ♕xe5+ ♔f7 39 ♗f1! ♕c1 40 ♕c7+ ♘e7 41 ♔g2 ♕d2+ 42 ♔h1 ♕e3 43 ♗c4+ ♔g7 44 ♔g2.

1b2) 31...h6!? 32 gxh6 (not 32 h4? hxg5 33 hxg5 ♘g7, when the open h-file prevents the activation of White's h2-bishop as above) 32...♘f6 33 ♗g1 ♔h7 (33...♗xh3 34 f3 c4 35 ♗xa7! ♗xg2+ 36 ♕xg2 poses no danger for White) 34 f3 ♕c6 35 ♕f2 ♘d7 36 ♕h4 ♕xd6 37 ♕d8 c4! 38 a4 (38 ♗xa7 ♕xa3 39 ♕e8 ♗f5 and White has no immediate perpetual; Black's intention is ...♕f8, and 40 ♗f1 is parried by 40...♕a1!) 38...a6 with the idea ...♕f8 gives Black slight winning chances.

2) The double-edged 29 h4!? *(D)* is interesting.



White wants to play ♗f3 and can in some lines activate his bishop via h3, but on the other hand the pawn is more vulnerable on h4, with ideas like ...♕g4 and ...♘g7-f5 in the air:

2a) 29...♖xe1+? is weak; after 30 ♕xe1 ♕f7 31 ♕e4 the advantage passes to White.

2b) 29...♕e7 30 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 31 ♗f3 ♘g3 32 ♔g2 is only equal.

2c) 29...♕g4 30 ♖xe5 dxe5 (30...f3 is inferior due to 31 ♖e8+ ♔f7 32 ♗g3 ♘xg3 33 fxg3 ♔xe8 34 ♕e3+) 31 d6! f3 (31...♗e6 32 d7!? ♗xd7 33 ♕d5+ gives White enough counterplay) 32 ♗g3 ♘xg3 33 fxg3 ♗e6 34 d7! ♗xd7 35 ♕d5+ leads to a draw.

2d) An interesting try is 29...♔f7 with the idea 30 ♗f3 ♕h3 31 ♗xh5 ♗xd5, but the opposite-coloured bishops save White after 32 f3 ♖xe1+ 33 ♕xe1 gxh5 34 ♕d2! ♕xf3 35 ♕xf4+.

2e) Black's best is 29...♕f5!? 30 ♖xe5 (30 ♗f3? loses immediately to 30...♕d3 31 ♕d1 ♕xf3!) 30...dxe5 and now:

2e1) 31 ♕b2 h6 (31...♕c8 32 d6 leaves Black too passive) 32 gxh6 ♕d3 (32...♔h7 33 ♕b8 can lead to the same position, as 33...♘f6 34 ♕xa7+ ♔xh6 35 ♕b8 represents no improvement for Black) 33 ♗xf4! exf4 (33...♘xf4 34 ♕b7 ♘h5 35 h7+ ♔h8 36 ♕f7 ♕b1+ 37 ♔h2 ♕b8 38 ♕xg6 doesn't give Black any winning chances, as his king is too exposed) 34 ♕b8+ ♔h7 35 ♕xa7+ ♔xh6 36 ♕xc5 ♘g7 37 ♕f8 (37 d6?! is weaker due to 37...♘e6 38 ♕c6 ♔h5!) 37...♔h7 38 ♕xf4 ♗xd5 (38...♕xc3 39 h5!, with the point that 39...♘xh5? is met by 40 ♕c7+ and ♗f1, is good for White) 39 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 40 a4. Black has only one pawn left and the knight must protect his king. A draw is the most probable result.

2e2) 31 ♕d1 ♕d7 and now:

2e21) 32 d6 ♗e6 33 ♔h1 ♘g7 34 ♗g1 ♘f5 35 f3 ♘xh4 36 ♗xc5 (36 ♗f1 is worse due to 36...c4) 36...♗h3 (after 36...♘xg2 37 ♔xg2 ♕d8, 38 d7! ♕xg5+ 39 ♔f1 ♕d8 40 ♕d6 ♗xd7 41 ♕d5+ ♔g7 42 ♕xe5+ ♕f6 43 ♗d4 saves the day for White, as he takes the crucial f4-pawn) 37 ♗f1 ♗xf1 38 ♕xf1 a5 (not 38...♕c6?, when 39 ♕c4+ ♔g7 40 ♕e4! turns the tables) 39 ♔g1 ♕c6 40 ♕c4+ ♔g7 41 ♕e6! ♘xf3+ 42 ♔f1! ♘xg5 (after 42...♘h2+ 43 ♔g1 ♕xc5+ 44 ♔h1! White scrapes a draw) 43 ♕xe5+ ♔h6 44 ♗d4. Although White shouldn't lose, this long line is highly suspicious and he can do better...

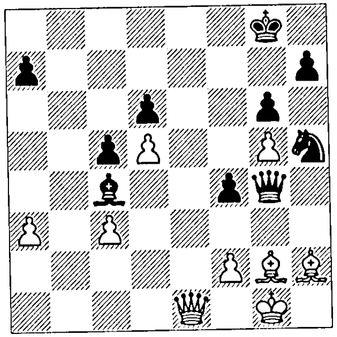
2e22) 32 ♕e1! ♕d6 (not 32...♗xd5 33 ♕xe5 f3? 34 ♗h3!, when the bishop is taboo) 33 ♕e4 and we get Gelfand's idea from line '1' with an extra tempo. White is out of danger.

29 ... ♖xe4
30 ♗xe4 ♕xh3
31 ♗g2

The threat was ...♕f1#. 31 ♗xf4? loses a piece to 31...♕g4+ and after 31 ♕d1 ♕h4 White also can't save the g5-pawn.

31 ... ♕g4
32 ♕e1 *(D)*

B



32 ... ♘g7!

The winning move. Also sufficient, but less convincing, is 32...♗xd5 33 ♕e8+ ♔g7 34 ♕e7+ ♗f7 35 ♕xd6 ♕xg5 (but not 35...f3??, as 36 ♗e5+ mates).

33 f3

Or 33 ♕b1 ♗xd5 34 ♕b8+ ♔f7 35 ♕c7+ ♔e8 36 ♗g3 (after 36 ♕b8+ ♔d7 37 ♕xa7+ ♔e6 White has no checks) 36...♕d1+ 37 ♗f1 fxg3 38 ♕c8+ ♔e7 39 ♕c7+ ♔e6, when the black king escapes victorious.

33 ... ♕xg5
34 ♕b1 ♘f5
35 ♕b8+ ♔g7
36 ♕xa7+ ♔h6
37 ♕f7 ♗f1!

Kasparov chooses the prettiest and quickest way, avoiding the simple trap 37...♘e3?? 38 ♗xf4, and also rejecting mundane continuations such as 37...♕h4 38 ♕e8 ♗xd5.

38 ♔xf1

38 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 39 ♕f8+ ♔h5 40 ♗xf1 ♕g3+ 41 ♔h1 ♘e3 doesn't help White.

38 ... ♘e3+
39 ♔e1 ♕h4+!

Now White loses both (!) bishops. Instead, 39...♘xg2+? would be a grave error due to 40 ♔f2.

40 ♔e2 ♕xh2
41 ♔d3 ♘f5

41...♘xg2 was also possible, but the bishop's fate is sealed anyway after 42 ♗f1 ♕f2.

0-1

Summary

Black's 4th move leads to an immensely complicated struggle, where general considerations are insufficient even in the development phase of the game. From move 8 onwards both sides have various independent alternatives and it's not easy to weave one's way through all the possible transpositions. However, the basic conflict is clear enough despite all the subsequently discovered subtleties and improvements – if Black doesn't get sufficient queenside

counterplay, he runs the risk of being squashed by White's advancing central pawns. In this respect 13 h3?!, 14 e4 and, on Black's side, 14...♕c8! helped in creating a favourable situation for Black. Not only 16...b3!?, but also the possible alternative 16...♗b5, enabled him to liquidate White's centre and solve his opening problems.

After 17...♘xe4 everything started to revolve around the e4-square. After Gelfand had taken the ambitious decision not to exchange, but instead to win or chase away Black's e4-knight, his moves 21 ♗h2 and especially 22 ♘c3?! were inconsistent and allowed Kasparov to fortify his outpost. With 23...♗xc3?! he even spurned a chance to win material just to continue his domination of the opponent's forces. The results were clear after 27...f4!; rarely does one see such a passive bishop-pair. White's problem was that activating his incarcerated h2-bishop would cost time and was inevitably connected with playing f3, which would in turn kill the other bishop. Nevertheless, Black had his own problems maintaining the f4-pawn and activating his h5-knight. All this is well illustrated in the 29 ♖xe5 and 29 h4!? lines, which both offered White good chances for a successful defence instead of the losing 29 ♖e4?.

Game 29

Loek van Wely – Veselin Topalov

Lost Boys tournament, Antwerp 1997

Modern Benoni [A70]

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 e6
3 ♘f3 c5
4 d5 d6

This small finesse has also been championed by the great Benoni expert GM Suba. The point is after 4...exd5 5 cxd5 d6 White can postpone the development of his b1-knight and continue 6 e4!? g6 7 ♗d3. Later he can deploy the knight to a3 or d2, from where it controls the important c4-square. Therefore the immediate 4...d6 limits White's options.

5 ♘c3 exd5
6 cxd5 g6
7 e4

For approximately a decade White's most popular weapon against the Benoni has been the set-up with ♗d3, h3 and subsequent play in the centre. If White tries to reach his goal by the alternative move-order 7 h3 (meeting 7...♗g7 with 8 e4), he must reckon with 7...a6 8 a4 ♕e7!?. With his main idea stopped, it's far from clear how White can gain anything tangible from the opening. Then 9 ♗g5 h6 10 ♗h4 ♗g7 11 e3 ♗f5!? 12 ♗d3 ♗xd3 13 ♕xd3 0-0 14 0-0 ♘bd7 15 e4 ♖fe8 16 ♖fe1 g5 17 ♗g3 ♘h5 18 ♗h2 ♘e5 19 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♕f3 ♗xh2+ 21 ♔xh2 ♕e5+ 22 g3 ♘f6 was equal in Komarov-Yudasin, St Petersburg 1997. An interesting, but less tested way for White to get in the desired central advance after all is 9 ♖a3!? ♗g7 10 e4 0-0 11 ♗d3. However, even here compared with the usual positions Black's ...♕e7 is a more useful move than ♖a3.

7 ... a6

Topalov has also contributed to Black's resources in the main line 7...♗g7 8 h3 0-0 9 ♗d3 b5!? 10 ♗xb5 (10 ♘xb5 is an important alternative) 10...♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♕a5+ 12 ♘fd2 ♕xb5 13 ♘xd6 ♕a6 14 ♘2c4 ♘d7 15 0-0 ♘b6 16 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 17 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 18 ♖b1 ♖fd8 19 ♗f4 ♕b7!. This move originates from the Bulgarian GM and neutralizes White's extra passed pawn for good. However, the most recent examples show that Black still faces an annoying task after 20 d6 ♗f8 21 ♕d3 ♗xd6 22 ♗xd6 ♖c6 23 ♖fd1 ♕d7 (or 23...♖cxd6 24 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 25 ♖xd6 c4 26 ♖d2 c3 27 ♖c2 ♕e4 28 ♖bc1 cxb2 29 ♖xb2 h5) 24 ♕a3 ♖xd6 25 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 26 ♕xa7 ♖e8! 27 ♕a3 ♖e2 28 ♕c3 ♕b6 29 a4 c4 30 ♖f1 ♕b3 31 ♖c1! ♖xb2 (31...♕xa4?! 32 ♕d4 ♕a6 33 ♖xc4 ♖xb2 34 ♕d8+ ♔g7 35 ♖c8 gave White a strong attack in Piket-Topalov, Monaco Amber blindfold 2000) 32 ♕xc4 ♕xc4 33 ♖xc4 ♖a2. Although these endgames have a drawish character, White remains the active side and can undertake lengthy winning attempts without any risk whatsoever. In this game Black has greater ambitions and opts for a more complex alternative, correctly anticipating Van Wely's opening choice.

8 a4

This prophylaxis in the Benoni is usually played quite automatically, but here it certainly isn't the only move. The 'threat' ...b5 is not so serious and White has more chances to gain an edge by a consistent central strategy: 8 ♗f4 b5 (8...♗g7 9 ♕a4+ ♗d7 10 ♕b3 ♕e7 11 ♗e2 b5 12 0-0 0-0 13 e5! is also advantageous for White) 9 ♕e2!? ♗e7 10 ♕c2 0-0 11 a4! b4 12 ♘b1 ♘h5 13 ♗h6 ♖e8 14 ♗d3 ♘d7 15 0-0 ♗f8 16 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 17 ♘bd2 ♘f4 18 ♖fe1 ♘xd3 19 ♕xd3 a5 20 ♕e3 ♔g7 21 ♘c4 ♘b6 22 ♘xb6 ♕xb6 23 h4 ♕d8 24 h5, Yakovich-Wedberg, Stockholm 1999. Despite considerable simplification, White has good attacking chances.

8 ... ♗g4 *(D)*

Black avoids the stereotyped 8...♗g7 9 h3 0-0 10 ♗d3 ♖e8 11 0-0 for a good reason. The reputation of this line is very good for White, as Black has a hard time creating any effective counterplay.

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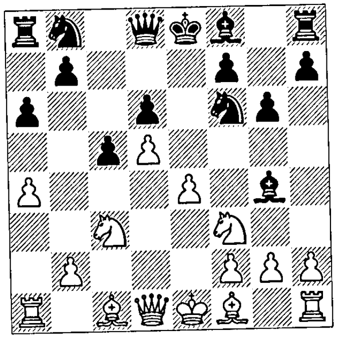

9 ♕b3?!

Ambitious, but also extremely risky. Van Wely explained afterwards he was in a do-or-die mood; undoubtedly he was also motivated by a recent success in this line. The more modest 9 ♗e2 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3 ♘bd7 11 0-0 ♗g7 12 ♗f4 ♕e7 is satisfactory for Black. He has increased his influence in the centre by exchanging his light-squared bishop, a piece that is rarely effective in the aforementioned lines with h3. His counterplay is based on his queenside majority and dark-square control (...h5, ...♘h7-g5, etc.).

9 ... ♗xf3

After 9...♕c7?! 10 ♘d2 the bishop sortie would lose its point.

10 ♕xb7

10 gxf3 ♕c7 is positionally undesirable for White with his wrecked pawn-structure, so he seeks solace in destroying Black's queenside.

10 ... ♘bd7!

Black sacrifices a handful of pawns with this enterprising move. The Dutch GM scored an easy point only two months earlier after 10...♘xe4?: 11 gxf3 ♘xc3 12 ♕xa8 ♗g7 13 ♖a3! 0-0 14 bxc3 ♖e8+ 15 ♔d1 ♕f6 16 ♗e2 1-0 Van Wely-Guseinov, Pula Echt 1997. 10...♗xg2 is also less energetic and weaker than the text-move; after 11 ♗xg2 ♘bd7 12 0-0 ♗e7 (12...♗g7?! 13 ♗f4 favours White) 13 f4 0-0 14 a5! ♖e8 15 ♕c6 ♖a7 16 ♗d2 ♕b8 17 ♘d1 ♗f8 18 ♕a4 ♗g7 19 ♗c3 ♕b5 20 ♕c2 White's central play gave him an advantage in Bratchenko-Berelovich, Minsk 1999.

11 gxf3 ♗g7 *(D)*

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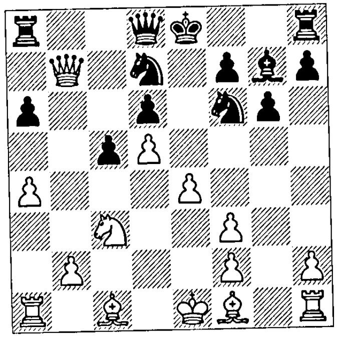


12 ♗f4!?

A novelty, although Van Wely claims it was unintentional. Database statistics can be very misleading, but here they deservedly paint a gloomy picture: from this position White has scored very badly, and after our game there were no further high-level examples.

1) After the greedy 12 ♗xa6?! ♖b8 13 ♕a7 (13 ♕c6 0-0 14 a5 ♘e5 15 ♕a4 ♘xf3+ gives Black a strong attack) 13...♕a5 (13...0-0 14 ♗e2 is less impressive for Black) 14 e5 0-0! both White's king and queen are in danger; e.g., 15 exf6 ♘xf6 16 ♗d2 ♖xb2 17 ♘e4 ♖xd2! 18 ♘xd2 ♖e8+ 19 ♔d1 ♗h6 20 ♘b1 ♕b4 21 ♔c2 ♘xd5 with an irresistible assault.

2) Simple development such as 12 ♕b3 0-0 13 ♗e2 ♘h5 is no solution for White either. For a minimal investment Black will have full dark-square domination after ...♗e5, because 14 f4 ♕h4 15 ♗xh5 ♕xh5 is even more dangerous for White.

3) Therefore White should try to profit from the temporary disharmony in Black's camp and attack the opponent's weakest point, d6. Therefore, the main alternative is 12 ♕c6 0-0! (after 12...♕b8, 13 ♗f4? 0-0! 14 0-0-0 ♕b3 is unplayable for White, but following 13 a5!? 0-0 14 ♗e2 Black's queen is misplaced and his initiative doesn't develop so fast) 13 ♕xd6 ♘h5 14 f4 (14 ♗h3 f5!, with the threat ...♖f6, doesn't help White much) 14...♖e8 15 ♗g2 ♖a7! 16 a5 ♕h4 17 ♘a4 ♖c8! 18 ♘b6 ♗f8 19 ♘xc8 ♗xd6 20 ♘xa7 ♘xf4 21 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 22 ♘c6 ♘f6 23 ♖d1 ♘xe4, Gavrikov-Lutikov, Minsk Sokolsky mem 1981. Due to White's undeveloped and uncoordinated army the rest of this game was pure carnage. This older game seems to be a very convincing antidote to 12 ♕c6, so a search for possible improvements from White's point of view is only natural.

12 ... ♖b8
13 ♕xa6 ♘h5?!

Now White at least partially consolidates. After 13...♖b6 14 ♕e2 ♘h5 15 ♗c1!? the misplaced rook gives White a tempo to advance his passed pawn. However, Van Wely rightly points out that 13...♖xb2! was critical:

1) After 14 ♕xd6? ♕a5 15 ♗e5 ♘xe4 White's position falls apart.

2) 14 ♘b5 0-0 and now:

2a) 15 ♖d1? loses to 15...♘xe4! 16 fxe4 ♕h4 17 ♗e3 ♕xe4.

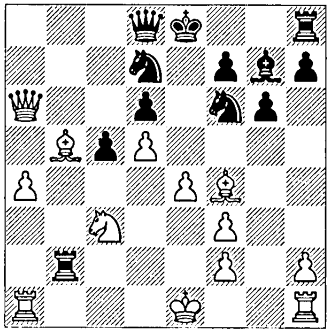
2b) After 15 ♗xd6? ♘xe4! (more forcing than 15...♘h5) 16 fxe4 ♕h4 17 ♗e2 ♖xe2+! 18 ♔xe2 ♕xe4+ 19 ♔d2 ♕xd5+ 20 ♔c2 ♕e4+ 21 ♔d2 ♖a8 White is lost.

2c) 15 ♗c1?! ♖b3 gives Black a powerful attack; e.g., 16 ♖a3 ♖b1 17 ♔d1 ♗h6 18 ♖c3 ♘xd5! 19 exd5 ♕g5.

2d) 15 ♗g5 is best, although 15...♕e8 gives Black a dangerous initiative.

3) White must get his king away from e1 at any price, so 14 ♗b5! *(D)* is his best chance:

B



3a) 14...♘h5?! surprisingly isn't ideal, since after 15 ♗xd6! ♗xc3+ 16 ♔f1 it is for a change Black's king trapped in the middle and if nothing else, White is threatening to force an immediate draw with ♗xd7+. Any winning attempts by Black involve some risk:

3a1) 16...♘hf6 17 ♕b7! is good for White; the threat is ♗c7 and after 17...♖xb5? 18 axb5 ♗xa1 19 ♗c7 he wins the black queen.

3a2) 16...f5 17 ♗xc5 ♘f4 18 ♗e3 ♖xf2+ 19 ♗xf2 ♗xa1 20 ♗e3 and White wins back the piece with a large advantage.

3a3) After 16...♖xb5 17 axb5 ♗xa1 18 ♕xa1 f6 19 ♔e2 White has sufficient compensation for the piece, since the d6-bishop literally cuts Black's position in two.

3b) This indicates Black that should patiently play 14...0-0! 15 ♖c1 (15 0-0 loses material to 15...♘h5) 15...♘h5 16 ♕xd6 (16 ♗xd6? ♗xc3+ 17 ♖xc3 ♖b1+), and now:

3b1) 16...♗xc3+ 17 ♖xc3 ♘xf4 (certainly not 17...♕a5?, when 18 ♗d2 ♖b1+ 19 ♔e2 ♖xh1 20 ♖c1 turns the tables) 18 ♕xf4 ♕a5 19 ♕c1 ♖b3 20 ♔d2 is not so convincing.

3b2) Stronger is 16...♘xf4 17 ♕xf4 ♗e5!? (17...♕a5 18 0-0 ♗xc3 19 ♗xd7 ♗d2 20 ♕g3 ♗xc1 21 ♖xc1 c4! is better for Black, but White's king has at least escaped from the danger zone and the strong central pawns give him counterplay) 18 ♕e3 (after 18 ♕h6? ♕f6 Black threatens, amongst other things, ...♗f4) 18...♗d4 19 ♕f4 (19 ♕h6 ♘e5! gives Black a ferocious attack) 19...♘e5 20 0-0 f5! (20...♖b3?! 21 ♕g3! prepares f4 and only helps White). Again Black's attack is dangerous, but not completely lethal and White still has counterchances.

14 ♗c1

14 ♗xd6? ♖b6 and 14 ♕xd6? ♖xb2 15 ♘b5 ♕a5+ 16 ♔d1 ♗e5 are out of the question for White.

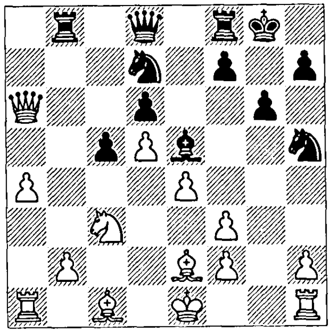
14 ... 0-0

15 ♗e2

The d6-pawn was still taboo and White must allow Black to occupy the f4-square, as 15 f4?! ♖e8 leaves his central pawns overexposed.

15 ... ♗e5 *(D)*

W



The opening is over and a complicated and unclear position has arisen. Black is two pawns down, but he has a lead in development and even more important is his full dark-square blockade. In any case, Black's task is easier in practice. His plan is more clear-cut, while White has various possibilities to consolidate his position, depending on the changing circumstances.

16 h4

White has to prevent ...♕h4.

16 ... ♘f4

A natural move, but both 16...♕f6 17 ♗g5!? ♕g7 (17...♗xc3+? 18 ♔f1! would only please White) 18 ♘b5 f6 and the immediate 16...f5!? also deserve attention.

17 ♗b5 f5

This allows welcome simplification. Black can't trap White's queen by 17...♖a8 in view of 18 ♕b7 ♘b6 19 a5, followed by ♖a3, but White must be very vigilant after the ambitious 17...c4 18 ♗xd7 (otherwise ...♘c5) 18...♕xd7 (18...♘d3+!? 19 ♔f1 ♕xd7 20 ♕xc4 ♘xb2 21 ♗xb2 ♖xb2 22 ♘d1 ♖d2 23 ♖c1 ♖a8 is another possibility; White's pieces are too passive to give him serious winning chances, but he is not in danger of losing either) and now:

1) 19 ♕c6?! ♘d3+ 20 ♔f1 ♕a7 21 ♗e3 ♕a5 and after b2 falls the c-pawn will be very dangerous.

2) 19 ♕xc4 ♖fc8 20 ♕a2! (the only move, as 20 ♕f1? loses on the spot to 20...♖xc3 21 ♗xf4 ♖xb2 22 ♗xe5 ♕xa4! and even after the more refined 20 ♕a6 ♖a8 21 ♕f1 ♕b7! 22 ♖a3 ♕b4 White's major pieces present a sorry picture and he is in big trouble) is perilous for White:

2a) The tempting 20...♘d3+ 21 ♔e2 ♕a7 (21...♘b4 22 ♕b3 ♕a7 23 ♔f1! enables White to defend with success) 22 ♔xd3 ♕xf2 23 ♕a3! ♕xf3+ 24 ♗e3 ♖xb2 25 ♕xb2 ♖xc3+ 26 ♕xc3 ♗xc3 27 ♖af1 gets Black nowhere.

2b) Better is 20...♕a7! (20...♕c7 21 ♗xf4 ♖xb2 is similar) 21 ♗xf4 (21 0-0 ♕c7 22 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 gives Black a large advantage; White will barely manage to avoid getting mated) 21...♖xb2! 22 ♕xb2 ♗xc3+ 23 ♕d2!? (23 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 24 ♗xd6? loses by force to 24...♕a6!) 23...♕d4, when Black has great winning chances.

3) 19 ♗xf4 is the most practical move, and also best. After 19...♗xf4 20 ♕c6! (20 ♕xc4?! is weaker since after 20...♖xb2 the threat is ...♖c8 and White will find it difficult to coordinate his forces; e.g., 21 ♘d1 ♖c8! 22 ♕d3 ♖d2 23 ♕b5 ♕a7 24 ♖b1 ♕d4 with an ongoing attack against the trapped king) 20...♕a7 21 ♕xc4 ♖xb2 22 ♘d1 ♖d2 23 ♔f1 (23 ♖a2? ♕a5 24 0-0 ♕d8! is a recurrent motif White must avoid) Black can't activate his f8-rook so quickly and White's king will be out of imminent danger on g2. After 23...♗e5 White will lose his a-pawn and we have a very similar position to the one mentioned earlier in this note after 18...♘d3+!?.

18 ♗xf4 ♗xf4

19 ♗xd7 ♕xd7

20 ♕e2 *(D)*

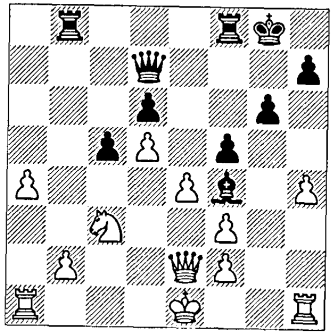
White has managed to exchange both dangerous knights, but his worries are far from over, as Black's initiative still persists.

20 ... ♗e5

Or:

1) 20...♖be8 deserts the b-file and gives White the chance to play 21 a5 (21 ♔f1 is inferior due to 21...fxe4; then after 22 fxe4?! ♗g3 23 ♘d1 ♖f4 White can't save the important e-pawn and so he must spoil his pawn-structure with 22 ♘xe4) or even 21 ♔d1!? ♗e5 22 ♔c2.

B



2) 20...♖b4!? is more to the point. This prevents White from plugging the b-file with his knight as in the game. Again Black's main worry is the advancing passed pawn after 21 a5 fxe4 22 fxe4:

2a) 22...♖fb8?! 23 a6 ♗e5 24 ♔f1! (24 ♕c2 ♕a7 is OK for Black; White must give up one of his queenside pawns) 24...♕a7 (24...♖xb2? loses immediately to 25 a7 ♗xc3 26 ♕xb2) 25 ♖a2. White's king will be safe on g2 and Black has no real compensation.

2b) Stronger is 22...♗e5 23 a6 ♕e7! (after 23...♕g7 White can activate his rooks by 24 ♖h3 ♖e8 25 ♖a3!? ♕d7 26 ♖f3 with a sizeable advantage), when Black's pressure against the numerous weaknesses (b2, e4, f2 and h4) gives him good compensation. It's difficult for White to coordinate his pieces effectively (here 24 ♖h3?! ♗xc3+ 25 bxc3 ♖xe4 26 ♖e3 ♖xe3 27 ♕xe3 ♕xh4 gets White nowhere) and tie down Black's forces as in line '2a'.

The text-move is directed against a5-a6.

21 ♘b5

Now 21 a5?! runs into 21...♕b7, when White must give up the b-pawn, or go for 22 ♘d1 fxe4 23 fxe4 ♕b4+ 24 ♔f1 ♖f4 25 f3 ♖bf8 26 ♔g2 ♖xf3 27 ♕xf3 ♖xf3 28 ♔xf3, when the a5-pawn barely gives him sufficient counterplay to scrape a draw.

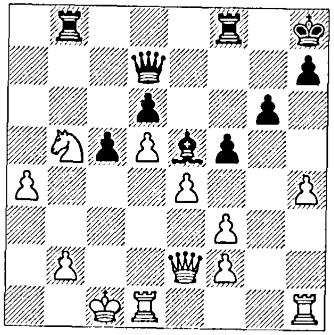
21 ... ♔h8

The straightforward 21...fxe4 22 fxe4 ♖f4 is unconvincing in view of 23 f3 ♖bf8 24 ♖a3 ♕g7 25 ♖h2; Black must bear in mind that the a-pawn is potentially dangerous. Topalov therefore makes a provocative semi-waiting move, which takes the sting out of a possible h5. At the same time he as if asks his opponent how he intends to coordinate his forces and make use of his extra pawns. Later after many vicissitudes it transpires that the king is not especially well placed on h8, but it was impossible to foresee this now.

22 0-0-0? *(D)*

After 22 ♔f1 fxe4 23 fxe4 ♖f4 the king won't find peace on g2 because 24 f3? is met by 24...♕g4 25 ♖a3 ♖bf8. However, the text-move also commits the king too early, moreover to a dangerous place. A move like 22 ♖a3!? was more flexible, postponing the decision between ♔d1-c1 or ♔f1-g2 and also lending support to the a-pawn if Black gets too carried away.

B



22 ... fxe4

Can Black gain any advantage from postponing this exchange? 22...♖a8 23 ♕c2 ♖fb8, by which Black prepares an exchange sacrifice to attack the exposed king, deserves a closer look. White then has several options:

1) 24 ♔b1 is analogous to the lines analysed a move later, except that here the third rank isn't open for the h1-rook to join the defence via h3. Nevertheless after 24...♖xb5 25 axb5 ♕xb5 26 ♖d3!? ♖a4 (after 26...c4 27 ♖c3 ♖a4 28 f4 White beats off the attack) 27 f4 (27 exf5 is weaker since 27...♕a6 28 ♖a3 ♖xa3 29 bxa3 ♕xa3 30 ♕a2 ♕d3+! 31 ♕c2 ♕xd5 gives Black very real winning chances) 27...fxe4 28 ♖b3 ♕a6 29 ♖a3 ♖xa3 30 bxa3 ♕b7+ 31 ♔a2 ♕xd5+ 32 ♕b3 ♕d2+ 33 ♔b1 ♕xf4 34 h5 White's counterplay should save the day. However, Black can play 24...fxe4!?, when 25 fxe4 transposes to note '1c' to Black's 23rd move, which is promising for him.

2) 24 ♖he1 and now:

2a) 24...♖xb5 25 axb5 and now 25...♖a2 26 exf5 transposes to line '3b1' and 25...♕xb5 26 exf5 to '3b2'.

2b) White doesn't have to worry unduly about 24...fxe4 25 ♖xe4!.

2c) However, 24...f4!? has to be taken seriously. The e5-bishop now stands unmolested and ...♖xb5 and ...♖xa4 are constantly in the air.

3) 24 exf5 is the most principled move:

3a) 24...♖xa4?! 25 ♕xa4 ♖xb5 26 ♖d2 (not 26 ♕a8+?, when 26...♔g7 27 ♕c6 ♗f4+ practically forces a draw after 28 ♖d2!, because 28 ♔b1? ♕xf5+ 29 ♔a2 ♖a5+ 30 ♔b3 ♗d2! is very dangerous for White) is insufficient for Black, because after 26...♕b7 27 fxg6 hxg6 (27...♗xb2+? 28 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 29 g7+ ♔xg7 30 ♖g1+ mates) 28 h5! g5 29 ♖e1 White wants to take on e5 and 29...♗f4 30 ♖e8+ ♔g7 31 ♕e4 ♗xd2+ 32 ♔d1 gives him a mating attack.

3b) Better is 24...♖xb5 25 axb5, and now:

3b1) 25...♖a2 is tricky. Now 26 ♕d3? ♕g7! 27 ♔d2 ♗f4+ 28 ♔e1 ♕xb2 and 26 ♕c4 ♖xb2 27 ♖d2 ♖b4 28 ♕a2 ♕xb5 29 fxg6 ♖a4 are relatively simple. 26 f4 is not ideal either, as after the quiet 26...♗f6! (26...♖xb2 27 fxe5 ♖xc2+ 28 ♔xc2 ♕xf5+ 29 ♔b3 ♕xe5 30 ♔a4 is only a draw) White is left in his predicament. The main enemy is the e5-bishop, so White should play 26 ♖he1! ♖xb2 27 ♕a4 ♕xf5 (27...♖xb5 28 ♕a8+ ♔g7 is weaker due to 29 ♖xe5! dxe5 30 ♕c6) 28 ♕e4 ♕f6 29 ♕xe5! dxe5 30 ♔xb2, when Black is fighting for a draw.

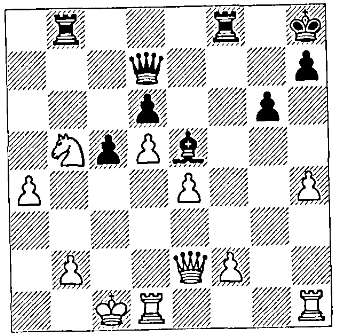
3b2) 25...♕xb5 26 ♖he1 (Black's threat was ...♖a2, and after 26 ♔b1 ♕a6 27 ♕b3 c4 28 ♕b4 c3! 29 bxc3 ♕a2+ 30 ♔c1 ♖a3 Black invades decisively) 26...♖a1+ 27 ♔d2 ♗f4+ (27...♖a2 is speculative in view of 28 ♖b1 c4 29 ♖e3) 28 ♖e3 ♖xd1+ 29 ♔xd1 ♗xe3 30 fxe3 ♕f1+ 31 ♔d2 ♕f2+ 32 ♔d3 ♕xf3 leads to an equal position. So the defence is not without resources, the main one being to harass the e5-bishop.

23 fxe4 *(D)*

23 ... ♕d8?!

Black improves his position quietly and readily pounces on another dark-square hole in White's camp. However, we have already seen a more incisive idea in the previous note – 23...♖a8! 24 ♕c2 (not 24 b3? c4, when the bastions are cracking) and now:

B



1) After 24...♖fb8 White's rooks still can't use the third rank and he has to find other ways to consolidate his queenside:

1a) 25 b3? loses immediately to 25...♖xb5 26 axb5 ♗f4+ 27 ♔b1 ♕a7 28 ♔b2 ♕g7+.

1b) 25 ♕c4 ♕f7! is very unpleasant for White. The least he will have to do is give up the h-pawn without addressing his main problems, as 26 ♖df1 ♕f3 puts him virtually in zugzwang: 27 b3? loses to 27...♖a5! and ...♖bxb5, while 27 ♔b1 invites 27...♖xa4! 28 ♕xa4 ♕e2 29 ♕c2 ♕xb5 with a lethal attack.

1c) There is hardly anything better than 25 ♔b1, preparing ♖d3. Then 25...♖a5 runs into 26 f4!, while after 25...♖xb5 26 axb5 ♕xb5 27 ♖h3 ♖a4 28 ♖dd3 White parries the most dangerous threats. Interesting is 25...♕g4!?, preventing ♖d3 and toying with the idea ...♖xa4 and ...♕e2, but the most consistent is nevertheless 25...♖xa4 26 ♕xa4 ♖xb5 27 b3 (weaker is 27 ♕a8+ ♔g7 28 ♖d2 ♕g4, when White can't effectively protect e4). Now White parries the quick tries:

1c1) 27...c4?! 28 ♕xc4 ♕a7 29 ♖d2! ♕a1+ (29...♖c5? 30 ♖a2!) 30 ♔c2 ♕xh1 (the attempt to bail out with 30...♕a2+ 31 ♔d1 ♕b1+ runs into the fantastic 32 ♕c1 ♖xb3 33 ♖c2 ♗f4 34 ♔e2!! ♗xc1 35 ♖hxc1, when the enemy queen is trapped!) 31 ♕xb5 ♕xe4+ 32 ♕d3 with great winning chances for White.

1c2) 27...♕b7 28 ♖h3 and now:

1c21) 28...♔g7 29 h5 (with the twin points 29...♖b4?! 30 hxg6 and 29...g5 30 h6+) is not quite clear.

1c22) 28...♖b4 29 ♕e8+ ♔g7 30 ♖dd3 and Black should bail out by 30...♕a6! (after 30...♕a7? 31 h5 Black doesn't even have a perpetual: 31...♕a1+ 32 ♔c2 ♕b2+ 33 ♔d1 ♕b1+ 34 ♔d2 ♕b2+ 35 ♔e3!? ♗d4+ 36 ♔f3 ♕xf2+ 37 ♔g4) 31 h5 ♖xb3+! 32 ♖xb3 ♕f1+ with a draw.

1c23) However, after the patient 28...♕b8! it's no fun for White. His king is permanently exposed and the pawns are weak, while Black's attacking ideas are ...♖b4 and ...c4, or ...♖b7-a7.

2) Even the less committal 24...♖f3!? 25 ♔b1 ♕g4 is strong. All White's pawns are isolated and he is running out of constructive moves.

24 ♖d3

White leaves the h1-rook to protect the h-pawn. He can't prevent ...♕a5, as the pressure after 24 ♕e1 ♖f3 would be unbearable. 24 b3 ♕a5 25 ♖h3 (25 ♕c2? loses to 25...♖xb5 26 axb5 ♕a3+) 25...c4! opens up the queenside and 24 h5 ♕a5 doesn't help White either, as 25 hxg6? ♕xa4 26 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 27 g7 loses material to 27...♕a1+! 28 ♔d2 ♕xb2+ 29 ♔e1 ♗xg7.

24 ... ♕a5

25 ♖a3

After 25 ♕c2? ♖xb5 26 axb5 ♕a1+ 27 ♕b1 ♗xb2+ 28 ♔c2 ♖xf2+ 29 ♖d2 ♕a4+ the attack breaks through.

25 ... ♕b4

Black has activity and the initiative, but White's defences still hold strong.

26 f3

This will sooner or later be necessary to support e4. 26 ♖hh3 fails to chase away the annoying queen due to 26...♖f4 (26...♗xb2+?? 27 ♕xb2+ is a check!) 27 ♖hb3? ♖xe4! with a big advantage for Black.

26 ... c4

Here the pawn will become more vulnerable, but Black could hardly do without this natural move. 26...♖f4 is no improvement as after 27 ♔b1!? ♖a8 28 ♕c2 ♖xh4 29 ♖xh4 ♕e1+ 30 ♔a2 ♕xh4 31 ♘c7 White activates his knight and starts pushing his passed pawn.

27 ♕c2 ♖fc8

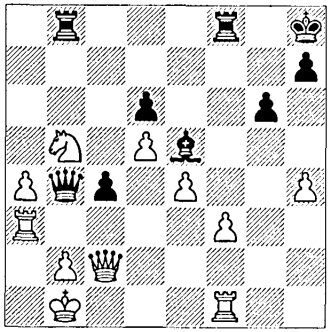
This is inaccurate, but even after the more consistent 27...♖f4!? 28 ♔b1 (28 h5 g5!? favours Black, as ...g4 becomes a potential threat) Black faces the problem of how to convert his pressure into something concrete. The try 28...c3 (28...♖xh4 29 ♖xh4 ♕e1+ 30 ♔a2 ♕xh4 31 ♕xc4 ♕f2 32 ♖b3 h5 33 ♕c1 and 28...♖bf8 29 ♘a7 ♖xf3 30 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 31 ♘c6 are weaker alternatives for Black) is countered by 29 ♖xc3! (29 ♕b3? ♕c5! gives Black the advantage) 29...♗xc3 30 ♕xc3+ ♕xc3 and now 31 ♘xc3 ♖xf3 32 ♘b5 or even 31 bxc3 ♖xf3 32 ♔c2. In both cases White risks little and it's Black who has to be very careful.

28 ♖f1 ♖f8

Black doesn't despair and admits his mistake. Despite the lost tempo the position still remains tense.

29 ♔b1 *(D)*

B



29 ... ♖a8?

This over-optimistic move can be explained by last-round jitters. Again the logical move was 29...♖f4, when after 30 ♖h1 we have the same position Black could have reached two moves earlier.

30 ♖c1

While this is not a bad move, with time-trouble approaching it would have been more prudent to get the queens off. After 30 f4! ♖xf4 (30...♗xf4 31 ♕c3+ ♕xc3 32 ♖xc3 is inferior for Black, because after 32...♖xa4 33 ♖cf3 ♖b8 34 ♘c3 ♖a3 35 ♔c2! he loses an exchange) 31 ♖xf4 ♗xf4 32 ♕c3+ ♕xc3 33 bxc3 ♗g3 34 ♔c2 ♖a5 35 ♔d2 White intends ♔e3-d4 and his a-pawn is worth more than Black's kingside counterplay.

30 ... ♖f4

Finally Topalov plays this move, but now it's too late. Black had ways to keep more tension in the position:

1) He could have passed with 30...♖a5, the idea being to meet 31 ♖a2 (31 ♖c3? is bad due

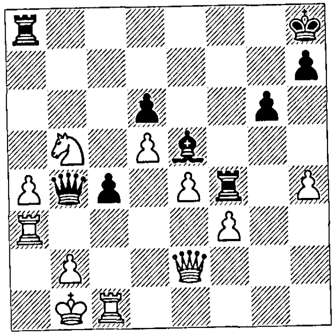
to 31...♖xa4! 32 ♖xc4 ♖fa8 33 ♖c8+ ♔g7 34 ♖xa8 ♖xa8) with 31...c3!? 32 ♘xc3 ♖xf3, but this is rather speculative.

2) 30...h5 moves a potential passed pawn nearer to its queening square, but also creates another weakness, which White can immediately target:

2a) 31 ♕g2?! is not the ideal way to do it due to 31...♖fb8! (31...♖f4? 32 ♖a2! ♖f6 33 ♕e2 ♖xa4 34 ♖xa4 ♕xa4 35 ♖xc4 is extremely good for White) 32 ♖a2 ♕b3 33 f4!? (33 ♕xg6 ♕d3+ is at least a draw for Black, as 34 ♔a1? ♗xb2+! 35 ♔xb2 ♖xb5+ mates) 33...♗g7! (not 33...♕d3+? 34 ♕c2 ♗xf4 35 ♖a3! ♕xc2+ 36 ♖xc2 with a technically won position for White) and after 34 ♘xd6 Black can force a draw with 34...♖xa4 35 ♖xa4 ♕d3+.

2b) 31 ♖g1 is stronger. Now Black must defend g6 passively with 31...♔h7 (31...♖fb8? is not good any more due to 32 ♔a2 ♔h7 33 f4! and e5), when White is better, but the position remains sharp.

31 ♕e2 *(D)*



31 ... ♖c8?

This puts Black on the very brink of defeat, but Topalov understandably didn't want to allow simplification. 31...c3 32 ♘xc3 ♖xh4 33 ♕b5 is good for White, as the a-pawn will be strong. 31...♖xa4 32 ♖xa4 ♕xa4 is less ambitious, but objectively necessary. 33 ♕xc4! (the tempting 33 ♖xc4 ♕b3 34 ♖c8+ ♔g7 35 ♘c7 ♖xf3 36 ♘e6+ ♔h6 37 ♕d2+ ♕e3 gets White nowhere) 33...♕xc4 34 ♖xc4 ♖xf3 (34...♖xh4 is worse due to 35 ♖c6), and now:

1) 35 b4 h6!?, followed by ...g5, is not so clear. After 36 ♘a7 (a plausible line such as 36 ♖c6 ♖b3+ 37 ♔c2 ♖xb4 38 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 39 ♖xd6 ♖xe4 40 ♖xg6 ♖xh4 41 ♔c3 ♔h7 42 d6 ♔xg6! 43 d7 ♖g4 44 d8♕ ♔h7 leads to a theoretical draw, as analysed by Guretzky-Kornitz in 1864; Black just mustn't let the white king get to f8 or the h-file) 36...g5 37 hxg5 hxg5 38 ♘c6 ♗f4 Black continues fighting.

2) 35 ♖c6 is a logical try. After 35...♖f6!? (35...♖f4 seems weaker in view of 36 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 37 ♖xd6 ♖xe4 38 ♔c2!? ♖xh4 39 ♔c3) 36 b4 ♖f4 37 ♖c4 (37 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 38 ♖xd6 ♖xe4 39 ♖b6 ♖xh4 and with the white rook misplaced, the outcome is open) 37...♖xh4 38 ♘a7 (38 ♘a3!?) the b-pawn is dangerous, but it's far from a forced win.

32 ♘a7!

White's knight at last gets a chance to be more than a mere stopgap. The threat was ...♖xh4-h2 and other moves lose a vital tempo:

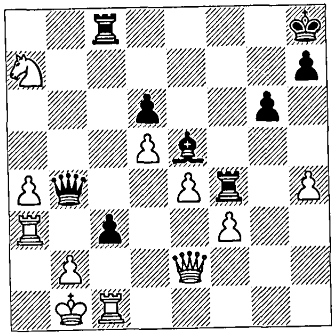
1) 32 ♕f2? ♖xh4 33 ♘xd6 ♖f8! 34 ♖xc4? ♖h1+ and White loses a piece.

2) After 32 ♖c2? ♖xh4 33 ♘a7? ♗xb2! (33...♖h1+ 34 ♔a2 ♖b8 has the pretty 35 ♘c6? ♕xa3+! and 36...♖a1# in mind, but 35 ♘b5 obliges Black to work for the point) 34 ♖xb2 ♕xa3 35 ♘xc8 ♖h1+ 36 ♔c2 c3 the attack crashes through.

3) 32 ♖a2? ♖xh4 33 ♘a7 loses to 33...♖h2 34 ♕xh2 ♗xh2 35 ♘xc8 ♗f4 36 ♖c3 (after 36 ♖h1 ♕d2!? the threat of ...♕d3+ and ...c3 enables Black to pick up White's central pawns with tempo) 36...♗e5 37 ♖c1 ♕b3!?, with the point 38 a5 ♕d3+ 39 ♔a1 (39 ♖c2 ♗f4) 39...c3.

32 ... c3 *(D)*

The only chance; 32...♖b8 33 ♖a2 c3 34 ♘c6 ♕xb2+ 35 ♖xb2 ♖xb2+ 36 ♕xb2 cxb2 37 ♖f1 is hopeless for Black.

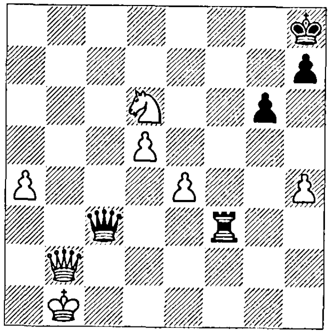


33 ♕b5?

This decisive tactical blunder completely turns the game around.

1) 33 ♖a2 ♖c5! 34 ♘c6 cxb2 35 ♖xc5 ♕xc5 36 ♖xb2 (36 ♕d1? ♗c3 37 a5 ♖xf3 38 a6 ♖d3! 39 ♕g4 ♕c4 40 a7 ♖d1+! leads to mate) 36...♗xb2 37 ♕xb2+ ♔g8 38 ♕c1!? (38 ♘d4 ♖xh4 39 ♕b8+ ♔f7 40 ♕b7+ ♔f6!? 41 e5+ ♔xe5 42 ♕e7+ ♔xd4 43 ♕xh4+ ♔c3 44 ♕e1+ ♔b3 45 ♕d1+ ♔b4 leads to a bad endgame for White) 38...♕b6+ 39 ♕b2 ♕g1+ avoids exchanging queens, when only Black can have winning chances.

2) However, White can force an endgame after all by 33 ♘xc8! cxb2 34 ♖cc3! ♗xc3 35 ♖xc3 ♕xc3 36 ♕xb2 ♖xf3 37 ♘xd6 *(D)*.



His pawns are very dangerous and Black's counterplay is too slow:

2a) 37...h5 38 a5 g5 39 a6 ♕xb2+ 40 ♔xb2 gxh4 41 e5 h3 42 a7 ♖f8 43 e6 is hopeless for Black.

2b) 37...♔g8 38 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 39 ♔b2 ♖h3 (passive defence by 39...♖c7 40 ♔b3 can't help Black for long) 40 a5 ♖xh4 41 a6 ♖f4 42 a7 ♖f8 43 e5 ♖a8 44 ♘b5 h5 (44...♔f7 is met by 45 [illegible]! and e6+) 45 e6 h4 46 e7, followed by ♘c7, also offers Black no hope.

2c) Even after the tricky 37...♔g7 38 ♕xc3+! (38 a5?! ♔f8! 39 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 40 ♔a2 ♖c5 41 ♘b7 ♖b5 42 a6 ♖b6 43 ♘c5 ♖b5 is the point; the a-pawn has ventured too far and White must repeat moves to avoid losing) 38...♖xc3 39 ♔b2 ♖f3 40 a5 ♔f6 41 a6 ♖f2+ (41...♔e5? 42 ♘c4+ ♔xe4 43 ♘d2+) 42 ♔b3 ♔e5 43 a7 ♖f8 44 ♘c4+ ♔xe4 45 ♘b6 White wins.

33 ... c2+!

34 ♔a2

White was short of time and had missed that 34 ♖xc2 loses a rook to 34...♕c1+.

34 ... ♕d2

35 ♕f1 ♕d4

0-1

Black nets a piece with an ongoing attack.

Summary

The real conflict started with the dubious 9 ♕b3?!. A comparison with the Najdorf Poisoned Pawn immediately springs to mind. However, there is the important difference that in the Sicilian the positional factors speak clearly for Black: White's main target is the enemy king and he has hardly any long-term assets. In our game after 10 ♕xb7 Black not only immediately had a dangerous attack, but even the positional factors mentioned above spoke in his favour. As a result of this, despite missing 13...♖xb2! and even allowing White to exchange another two pairs of minor pieces, Black retained a permanent initiative.

White's main worries after 20...♗e5 were not only his weak and split pawns, but also, and primarily, his king position. To achieve consolidation he had somehow to connect his rooks while keeping the threat a5-a6 looming over Black's head. In this sense 22 0-0-0? was a serious mistake for more reasons than one. The notes show that on c1 the king could have barely survived a direct assault after 23...♖a8 and 24...♖fb8; the second problem was the isolation of his pawns. Against Black's powerful e5-bishop White would ideally like to play the solidifying b3 and f3; this would have been impossible after 24...♖f3!?. Here the chronic dark-square weakness would enable Black to invade via the light squares (see also the Summary to Game 27). However, Topalov didn't appreciate that this was a critical moment; his 23...♕d8?! was too slow and gave White time to coordinate his defence. In the final phase starting with 27...♖fc8 the complexity of the game began to weigh down upon both opponents and practical considerations started to prevail over objective assessment. The number of errors grew and Van Wely committed the final one (33 ♕b5?) in a position that was objectively winning for him.

Game 30

Vladimir Kramnik – Boris Gelfand

Investbanka tournament, Belgrade 1997

King's Indian Defence, Classical Main Line [E97]

1	**♘f3**	**♘f6**
2	**c4**	**g6**
3	**♘c3**	**♗g7**
4	**e4**	**0-0**
5	**d4**	**d6**
6	**♗e2**	**e5**
7	**0-0**	**♘c6**
8	**d5**	**♘e7**
9	**b4**	

For about half a century this has been one of the key King's Indian positions, with White's preferences gradually switching from 9 ♘e1 and 9 ♘d2 to the currently immensely popular text-move. Kramnik is its foremost exponent and even such an avid 1 e4 player as Anand gives 9 b4 a try from time to time.

9 ... ♘h5

At this point Black has to make an important decision. Practice has shown that stereotyped moves such as 9...♘e8 or 9...♘d7 10 c5!? are insufficient to maintain the balance, as White's play is quicker and more potent. So Black has to supplement his kingside activity with some other positional ideas, breaking up White's queenside or central counterplay being the main ones. In our game Black opts for the latter; the former is represented by 9...a5 10 ♗a3 (10 bxa5 c5 is less popular nowadays, although after 11 a4 ♖xa5 12 ♘d2 it leads to similar positions to ones we'll discuss below) 10...axb4 11 ♗xb4 ♘d7 12 a4 ♗h6 13 a5 f5 14 ♘d2 (or 14 ♗d3). White has had very good practical results in this subvariation; this position also shows why the aficionados of the Classical started preferring 9 ♘d2 or 9 b4: here Black can't close his eyes and the centre so easily and go with ...f4 for an all-out attack as in most of the lines including f3. Without this move, Black's assault is not so effective and invariably White comes first on the queenside. On the other hand, the question whether to refrain from f3 is a very complex one, as it gives extra protection to e4, making it more difficult for Black to play effectively in the centre.

10 ♖e1

Although this move had appeared even earlier, only in 1995 did Ivan Sokolov realize its true value and since then it has become White's main option. The Bosnian GM was most probably inspired by the game Granda-Nunn, Amsterdam Donner mem 1995, where White played 10 c5 ♘f4 11 ♗c4 ♗g4 12 h3 ♗h5 and even though he went on to win the game, the pin was unpleasant and ♖e1 and ♗f1 were necessary later on anyway. So why not 10 ♖e1 immediately? The e2-bishop is formally a bad bishop, but it plays an important role in both the attack and the defence and is certainly worth preserving. The older alternative with the same idea was 10 g3, but this weakens White's kingside.

10 ... f5

The most natural move. 10...c6!? 11 ♘d2 ♘f4 12 ♗f1 ♗d7 is less tested, but interesting. However, the main alternative is 10...a5:

1) The first act of the theoretical duel between Kramnik and Gelfand in this line went 11 ♗a3 ♘f4 12 ♗f1 ♗g4 and now 13 h3?! ♗xf3 14 ♕xf3 axb4 15 ♗xb4 c5! 16 dxc6 ♘xc6 17 a3 ♘e6 18 ♘b5 ♘ed4 with easy equality for Black, Kramnik-Gelfand, Dortmund 1996; although later it was discovered that 13 ♖e3!? keeps more tension in the position, such an artificial move doesn't inspire too much confidence.

2) 11 bxa5 ♖xa5 12 ♘d2 ♘f4 13 ♗f1 c5 14 a4 and then:

2a) 14...♗a6 15 ♖a3! g5 16 g3 (White can well play the more sedate 16 ♘b5) 16...♘h3+ 17 ♗xh3 ♗xh3 18 ♕h5 ♕d7 19 ♕xg5 h6 20 ♕e3 f5 21 ♕e2 f4 22 ♘b5 and now 22...♔h7 23 gxf4 exf4 24 ♔h1 left White somewhat better in a volatile position and he went on to win in Kramnik-Kasparov, Novgorod 1997. Naturally improvements were found afterwards for both sides: 22...♘g6 is more accurate.

2b) In the year 2000, Bologan and Fedorov came up with the patient 14...♘h5!?, by which Black first transfers his knight back to d7 before starting any action with ...f5.

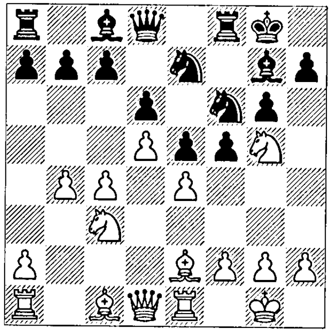
But the most significant fact to my mind has been Kasparov giving up the King's Indian for the time being after the aforementioned game with Kramnik, a sure sign that the line needs repairs. Black can also play 10...♘f4 11 ♗f1 and postpone his choice between the outlined possibilities.

11 ♘g5

The second act of the aforementioned theoretical duel went 11 c5 fxe4 12 ♘xe4 ♘f4 13 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 14 ♘fd2 dxc5 15 ♗c4 ♘xd5 16 ♘b3 c6 17 ♘bxc5 ♔h8 18 b5 ♖f8 19 ♖b1 and now 19...♘b6?! 20 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 21 ♘g5 ♖d4 22 ♗b3 cxb5 23 ♘f7+ ♔g8 24 ♘d6+ ♔h8 25 ♘f7+ ♔g8 26 ♘d6+ ♔h8 27 ♘xb5! with excellent compensation for White, Kramnik-Gelfand, Novgorod 1996. However, Black is OK after both 19...♗g4 and 19...♕c7!?.

11 ... ♘f6 *(D)*

11...♘f4 12 ♗xf4 exf4 13 ♖c1 ♗f6 (13...fxe4 14 ♘cxe4 ♘f5 15 ♗g4! is also more pleasant for White) 14 ♘e6 ♗xe6 15 dxe6 ♗xc3 16 ♖xc3 fxe4 17 ♗f1 e3 18 fxe3 fxe3 (18...♘c6 19 exf4 ♖xf4 20 ♖f3! doesn't solve Black's problems) 19 ♖cxe3 c6 20 ♕d2 d5 21 cxd5 cxd5 22 ♕d4 ♕d6 23 ♕c5 was Kramnik-Shirov, Tilburg 1997. Here, 23...♕xc5 24 bxc5 b6 would have limited White's advantage to manageable proportions, but most players understandably tend to avoid lines where the opponent can torture them without taking any risks.



12 ♗f3

Surprisingly in Kramnik-Ivanchuk, Monte Carlo Amber blindfold 2000, Kramnik chose the older move 12 f3. However, this was only a rapid blindfold game and hardly a start of a new trend. A simple and good reaction is 12...h6 13 ♘e6 ♗xe6 14 dxe6 ♖c8!? 15 b5 (15 ♘d5 ♘h7!, with ideas such as ...♘f8 or ...♘c6-d4, will force White to sacrifice his detached pawn) 15...fxe4 16 fxe4 ♔h7 17 ♗g4 (17 ♕d3 ♘eg8 18 ♕h3 ♕c8 is OK for Black) 17...c6! 18 ♗h3 d5 19 exd5 cxd5 and Black had no problems in Notkin-Nevednichy, Bucharest 1997. In comparison with this line the light-squared bishop can play a much more active role on f3.

12 ... c6

Act 3 went 12...fxe4 13 ♘gxe4 ♘f5 14 ♗g5 ♘d4 15 ♘b5! ♘xf3+ 16 ♕xf3 ♗f5 17 ♕b3! ♗xe4?! 18 ♖xe4 ♕d7 19 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 20 ♖ae1 and after inadvertently exchanging his light-squared bishop in Kramnik-Gelfand, Vienna 1996, Gelfand got a King's Indian nightmare.

13 ♗e3!?

This is a trademark of Kramnik's. Interest in the older continuation 13 ♗b2 faded when it was discovered that Black could safely reply 13...h6 14 ♘e6 ♗xe6 15 dxe6 fxe4:

1) 16 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 17 ♘xe4 ♘f5 18 ♕g4 ♔h7 19 ♖ad1 ♕e7 20 ♖d3 ♖ae8! 21 ♖h3 d5 22 cxd5 cxd5 23 ♘c5 e4, Averkin-Zakharstov, Krasnodar 1998, is very good for Black and already promises him an advantage after 24 ♗xg7 ♘xg7.

2) 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 17 ♖xe4 d5 18 cxd5 cxd5 19 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♗xe5 ♕b6 21 ♕d2 ♕xe6 22 ♖e1 ♖xf3 23 gxf3 ♘f5 is harmless; this was known even earlier.

13 ... f4

Although Black had some initial success with this move, after our game it has, perhaps unjustly, been completely discarded. However, even nowadays it's not completely clear how he should proceed.

1) 13...h6 14 ♘e6 ♗xe6 15 dxe6 can lead to the same position after 15...f4 16 ♗c1, while 15...g5 16 exf5 ♘xf5 17 ♕d3 ♘xe3 18 ♖xe3 ♕e7 19 ♖d1 was played in Kramnik-Nijboer, Wijk aan Zee 1998. Now even after 19...♕xe6 (best) 20 h3!? ♖ad8 21 ♘e4 White has full compensation for the pawn, his bishop is a much better piece than its black counterpart and moreover Black's king is vulnerable.

2) The main subsequent developments took place in the line 13...cxd5 14 cxd5 h6 15 ♘e6 ♗xe6 16 dxe6 fxe4 17 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 18 ♗xe4 d5 19 ♗c2 b6, but also here Black didn't achieve

full equality after 20 ♕g4 ♖f6 21 ♗b3 ♕d6 22 ♖ad1 ♖d8 23 b5 ♕xe6 24 ♕xe6+ ♖xe6 25 ♗c1 ♔f7 26 ♗a3 e4 27 g3 ♖d7 28 ♗xe7 ♔xe7 29 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 30 ♗xd5 ♗c3 31 ♖e2 ♖e5 32 ♗xe4 in Kramnik-Shirov, Linares 1998.

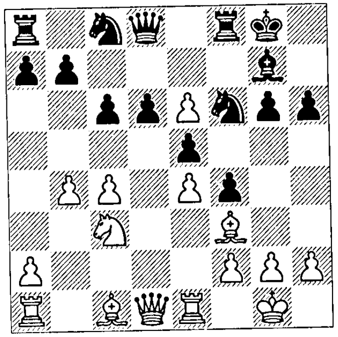
3) Thus it's better to refrain from direct continuations and keep various options of releasing the central tension open with a flexible move like 13...♔h8!?.

14 ♗c1 h6

14...cxd5 15 cxd5 (after 15 exd5?! e4, 16 ♗xe4? h6! costs White a piece, so he must sacrifice an exchange with 16 ♖xe4) 15...h6 16 ♘e6 ♗xe6 17 dxe6 only opens the position for White's bishops. Here the apparently doomed e6-pawn is much stronger than it seems; e.g., 17...♘c6 18 ♘d5 ♖e8 19 ♕b3 ♔h7 20 ♗b2 and thanks to the motif 20...♖xe6 21 ♘c7 White retains strong pressure.

15 ♘e6 ♗xe6
16 dxe6 ♘c8 *(D)*

W



17 b5!

An important novelty. White uses his e6 outpost as a decoy to break up Black's queenside. Kramnik's move is more energetic than the earlier attempt 17 ♕b3 ♕e7 18 c5 ♖e8 19 ♗e2 ♔h7 20 ♗a3 (better than 20 ♗c4 b5! or 20 b5 ♕xe6 21 ♗c4 ♕e7 22 ♗a3 dxc5 23 bxc6 bxc6 24 ♘a4 ♘d7) 20...♕xe6 21 ♗c4 ♕e7 22 ♖ad1 b5 23 cxb6 ♘xb6 24 b5 ♘xc4 25 ♕xc4 c5, Krasenkow-Shulman, Vilnius 1997. Now even 26 ♗b2 (best) leads to an unclear position with at most barely adequate compensation for White.

17 ... ♕e8

Black faced a difficult choice here. Other moves:

1) 17...c5?! 18 ♘d5 ♖e8 19 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 20 ♗g4 h5 21 ♗h3 is unattractive for Black. His knight is miles away from d4 and his kingside is vulnerable, while White has reliably protected e6 and intends to open up the position by playing g3.

2) 17...♘b6 18 bxc6 bxc6 is more complicated, but also not ideal for Black:

2a) 19 c5 dxc5 20 ♗a3 ♕e7! 21 ♘a4 ♘xa4 22 ♕xa4 ♕xe6 23 ♗e2 ♔h7 and the simplification considerably eases Black's defence.

2b) 19 ♗a3 c5 (19...♘xc4? loses material to 20 ♕b3) 20 ♘b5! (after 20 ♘d5 ♖e8 21 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6! 22 ♗g4 ♘xc4 23 ♕d5 Black has 23...♕a5! 24 ♕xc4 ♕xa3 25 ♖ab1 ♖ab8 and although his position seems precarious, White has no concrete attacking continuation) 20...♘c8 (after 20...♘xc4?! 21 ♕b3 a6 22 e7 ♕xe7 23 ♕xc4+ d5 24 ♕c1! axb5 25 ♗xc5 Black loses an exchange without compensation) 21 ♕d3 gives White some advantage.

2c) 19 ♕b3!? ♕e7 20 ♗a3 (with the tactical idea 20...♕xe6?! 21 ♗xd6!) is more promising, and gives White the advantage.

3) Therefore Black should try to eliminate the e6-pawn as soon as possible, but after 17...♖e8 18 bxc6 bxc6 19 c5 ♖xe6 20 ♕b3 ♕e8 21 ♗e2 White activates his light-squared bishop as in the game.

4) 17...♕e7 18 bxc6 bxc6 is slightly more tricky, but the accurate 19 ♗a3! (19 ♕a4?! ♘b6 20 ♕xc6 ♖fc8 21 ♕b5 ♕xe6 hands over the advantage to Black and 19 c5 dxc5 20 ♗a3 ♘b6 leads to the satisfactory line '2a' above) 19...♕xe6 20 c5 just transposes to the game.

18 bxc6 bxc6
19 c5 ♕xe6

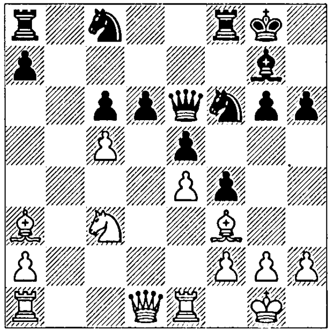
19...dxc5?! 20 ♗a3 ♕xe6 21 ♘a4 leads to the game position, but the text-move doesn't allow White's knight to c5 so quickly.

20 ♗a3 *(D)*

20 ... dxc5?!

This, however, is inconsistent and enables White to activate all his minor pieces and increase his pressure. Therefore 20...♖d8!? deserves serious attention; then, depending on the circumstances, Black will choose between ...d5 and ...dxc5. Here, White's road to an advantage is less clear-cut. 21 cxd6?! ♘xd6 and 21 ♕a4 dxc5, followed by ...♘b6, lead nowhere for him, while 21 ♕c2 d5 22 exd5 cxd5!?

B



23 ♕xg6 ♘e7, followed by ...e4, is unclear to say the least, as Black's central pawns are very impressive.

More intricate is 21 ♕d3 d5 (21...♖d7?! 22 ♕a6! dxc5 23 ♘a4 is bad for Black) 22 exd5 cxd5 23 ♖ad1 ♘e7 24 c6! e4 (24...♘xc6 25 ♘xd5 ♔h7 is also playable; regaining the pawn with 26 ♘xf4 ♖xd3 27 ♘xe6 ♖xa3 28 ♗xc6 ♖c8 doesn't promise White anything tangible) 25 c7 ♖d7 26 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 27 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 28 ♕xd5+ ♘xd5 29 ♖xd5 ♖xc7 30 ♗xe4 ♖e8, but White's edge remains infinitesimal.

Probably the best reaction is to prevent Black from creating a pawn-centre by 21 ♕e2!? d5 22 exd5 cxd5 (22...♘xd5!? 23 ♗b2 is also possible; White's initiative is not as threatening as in the game) 23 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 24 ♖xe5 ♘e4 25 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 26 ♘xd5 ♗xa1 27 ♗xe4 ♖b8 28 c6 and the passed pawn is dangerous.

21 ♘a4 ♘b6
22 ♘xc5 ♕f7

It appears that Black is not doing too badly after all; he controls c4, prepares ...♖fd8 and ...♗f8...

23 ♕c1! *(D)*

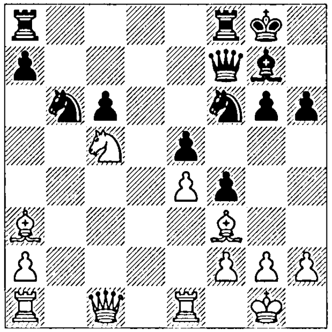
This inconspicuous little move decides the theoretical duel in White's favour. He now activates his bishop via d1 and Black has to fight for bare survival.

23 ... ♕c4

After 40 minutes of thought Gelfand decides at least to exchange queens. After 23...♘c4? 24 ♗d1 he would lose material.

24 ♗d1 ♕xc1
25 ♖xc1 ♖fc8
26 ♗b3+ ♔h7
27 ♘e6 a5

B



Black logically strives for activity, but on the other hand the a-pawn will become weaker and White can start forcing matters. 27...♘fd7!? is interesting. Black would like to play ...♗f6, but he can also return the extra c-pawn at a suitable moment; e.g., 28 ♗d6 c5 29 ♘xc5 ♖c6 and White's advantage stays within limits.

28 ♘xg7 ♔xg7
29 ♗e6 ♘bd7

The only move. 29...♖c7? loses quickly to 30 ♗d6 and also 29...♘fd7 30 ♖ed1 ♖c7 (after 30...♖a7 31 ♗c5 ♖b8 32 ♗xd7 ♖xd7 33 ♗d6 Black's position falls apart) 31 ♗d6 ♖cc8 32 ♖b1! ♔f6 33 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 34 ♖b7 enables White to penetrate decisively.

30 ♖ed1 ♖a7
31 ♗b2

The immediate 31 ♗d6 ♖e8 32 ♗h3 ♔f7 is not so convincing. White could have played the prophylactic 31 f3 first, but even better than the text-move is Kramnik's suggestion 31 g3!? fxg3 (31...g5 32 gxf4 gxf4 33 ♗d6 is different, now that the bishop has an extra outpost on f5) 32 hxg3 and White will proceed to open the kingside for his bishops with f4.

31 ... ♖cc7

Black finally creates a threat. 31...♖b8 32 ♗a1 ♖b6 is more active; then after 33 ♖d6 Black has 33...♖ab7 with ideas like ...c5 or ...♖b1. Nevertheless 33 g3 is stronger; Black then remains in dire straits.

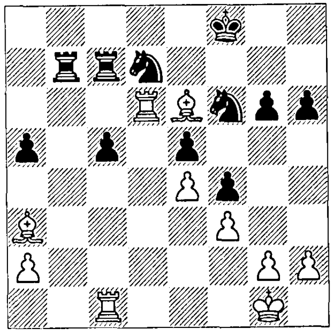
32 f3 ♔f8

Now White regains the pawn with interest. However, passive defence was dreary; after 32...c5 33 ♖d6 ♖ab7 34 ♗c3 a4 35 ♖cd1 Black won't be able to hold all his weaknesses in the long run.

33 ♖d6 ♖ab7
34 ♗a3

34 ♗c3? ♔e7 35 ♖cd1 ♘d5! enables Black to solve all his problems.

34 ... c5!? *(D)*



A good practical decision: Gelfand keeps his only hope for counterplay alive and gives up his kingside pawns instead.

35 ♗xd7 ♘xd7
36 ♖xg6 ♔f7

After 36...h5 37 ♖h6 Black would lose his h-pawn anyway and moreover from h5 the rook would tie down a piece to the defence of the e5-pawn.

37 ♖xh6 c4

An extra pawn, active pieces – the game is decided, isn't it? However, Gelfand continues to resist doggedly.

38 g3

Not a bad move, but more accurate was to pay attention to the c-pawn first with 38 ♖d6!? c3 (38...♘f8 39 ♖d5 threatens ♗d6xe5) and now:

1) 39 ♖d3 c2 40 ♔f2 ♘c5!? (40...♖b1 41 ♔e2 reliably checks the c-pawn) 41 ♗xc5 (41 ♖d2 ♖b1 is not clear any more; the line 42 ♖cxc2?? ♘d3+ 43 ♔e2 ♖e1+ 44 ♔xd3 ♖e3# is funny for everyone except White) 41...♖xc5 gives Black chances to save the game.

2) Better is 39 ♖c2! ♖b1+ 40 ♔f2 ♘f8 41 ♖d3, disarming the passed pawn. After 41...♖a1 White can play even 42 ♖d5.

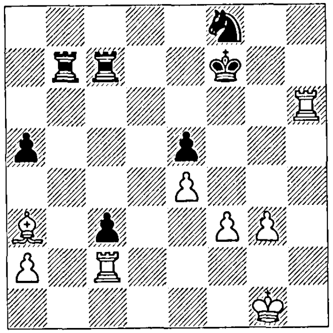
38 ... fxg3

The immediate 38...c3 would probably just come to the same thing. After 39 ♖c2 (39 gxf4 is weaker since after 39...c2! Black threatens ...♖c3; e.g., 40 ♖a6? ♖c3 41 ♖xa5 ♖xa3 42 ♖xa3 ♖b1 or 40 fxe5 ♘xe5 41 ♖f1 ♘d3 and the pawn will cost White a piece, with a probable draw), 39...fxg3 40 hxg3 transposes to the game, while omitting the exchange with 39...♘f8 allows 40 gxf4 exf4 (40...♘e6?! 41 ♖h7+ ♔f6 42 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 43 ♗d6 ♖g7+ 44 ♔f1 and Black loses his main pride) 41 ♖d6 (41 ♗xf8? is weak since after 41...♔xf8, compared with the game White doesn't have the motif ♖hh2, overprotecting his second rank). Black's knight doesn't have an outpost on d4 any more and following 41...♘g6 42 ♔f2 White's win is a matter of technique.

39 hxg3 c3
40 ♖c2

Just before the time-control White quite logically stops the c-pawn. 40 ♖d6 c2 41 ♖d3 ♖b1 42 ♔f2 ♘f8! gives Black too much play; after 43 ♖b3 ♖xb3 44 axb3 ♘e6 45 ♗d6 ♖c6 46 ♗xe5 ♘c5! 47 ♖xc2 ♘xe4+ a draw is the most likely result.

40 ... ♘f8! *(D)*



The only way to activate the knight and continue the fight.

41 ♗d6!

This move required sharp calculation, since White relinquishes his control of b2. 41 ♖d6? ♘e6 42 ♖d3 ♘d4 was already out of the question for White, while the more sedate alternatives 41 f4 exf4 42 gxf4 ♖c4 and 41 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 (41...♖b1+!? 42 ♔f2 ♔xf8 is also possible) are less forcing; Black then continues to resist.

41 ... ♖b1+?!

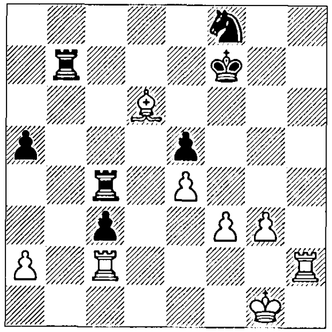
After the immediate 41...♖b2 the cleanest is 42 ♖c1!? (42 ♗xc7 ♖xc2 43 ♗xe5 ♘e6 44 ♔f1 is also good for White) 42...♖cb7 (42...c2 43 ♗xc7 ♖b1 44 ♖c6 ♖xc1+ 45 ♔g2 is hopeless for Black) 43 ♖h2 ♖xh2 44 ♔xh2 ♖b2+ 45 ♔h3 and White activates even his king.

More testing was 41...♖c4!?; White must then avoid some tactical traps:

1) 42 ♗xf8? ♖b1+ turns the tables; even after 43 ♔g2!? (best) 43...♖b2 44 ♖xb2 cxb2 45 ♖b6 ♖b4 46 ♗xb4 b1♕ 47 ♗c5 ♕xa2+ only Black can win.

2) 42 ♗xe5?! ♖b1+ 43 ♔f2 ♖b2! 44 ♖xb2 cxb2 45 ♖b6 ♘d7 46 ♖b7 b1♕ is drawish.

3) 42 ♖hh2! *(D)* is necessary.



After 42...♖b1+ (42...♘d7 43 ♔f2 ♔e6 44 ♗a3 is similar) 43 ♔f2 ♘g6 44 ♗a3 White plans ♗c1 and ♔e2-d3, when he will gradually surround the c3-pawn and/or activate his own pawns. His advantage should be enough to win in the long run.

42 ♔f2 ♖b2

Black had a last chance to transpose to line '3' of the previous note by 42...♖c4 43 ♖h2.

43 ♗xc7 ♖xc2+
44 ♔e3 ♖xa2

Black has no time to protect his central pawn; 44...♘g6 45 ♗xa5 gives him no counterchances at all and 44...♖c1 45 ♖c6! c2 46 ♗xe5 is no improvement.

45 ♗xe5 c2

45...♖a3? loses a piece to 46 ♖f6+ ♔e7 47 ♖xf8.

46 ♖c6 ♖a3+

46...♘e6 47 f4 ♖a3+ 48 ♔e2 is no improvement for Black, as 48...♖xg3? loses on the spot to 49 f5.

47 ♔e2 ♖a2
48 ♔d2 ♘e6
49 f4

Not 49 ♖xc2? ♖xc2+ 50 ♔xc2 ♘g5, when White must allow either the splitting of his pawns by ...♘xf3, or the complete liquidation of them after 51 f4 ♘xe4 52 g4 ♘f2 53 g5 ♘h3 followed by ...♔g6 and ...♘xg5, with a draw in both cases.

The text-move wins, but Kramnik shows that 49 ♔c1! ♖a3 50 ♗c3 was even more exact, since 50...♘g5 51 ♔xc2 ♘xf3? runs into 52 ♖f6+.

49 ... c1♕+!

Black does his best and eliminates the central pawn. After 49...a4 50 g4 or 49...♖a4 50 ♔d3 ♖a3+ 51 ♔xc2 ♖xg3 52 f5 ♖g2+ 53 ♔d3 the marching pawns decide.

50 ♔xc1 ♖a4
51 ♔d2

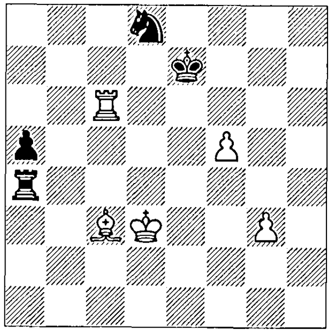
After 51 f5 ♘g5 52 ♖c7+ ♔e8 White doesn't win directly, so he rightly prefers to coordinate his forces.

51 ... ♖xe4
52 ♗c3! ♔e7

Thanks to the simple trick 52...♘xf4? 53 ♖f6+, White activates his king.

53 ♔d3 ♖a4
54 f5 ♘d8 *(D)*

White has an immediate tactical solution after 54...♘g5 55 ♗f6+ ♔d7: 56 ♗xg5! ♔xc6 57 f6 ♖a3+ 58 ♔c4 and White's f-pawn is unstoppable.



55 ♖a6?!

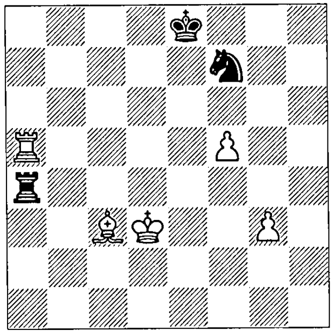
With the second time-control approaching, Kramnik starts to falter. The a-pawn doesn't present any serious danger and White's most important immediate concern should have been to get his pawns going. Thus 55 ♖g6 with the idea g4 is strong; also winning is 55 ♗f6+ ♔d7 56 ♖c4 ♖a3+ (56...♖xc4 57 ♔xc4 ♘f7 58 ♔d5 is similar) 57 ♖c3 ♖xc3+ 58 ♗xc3 a4 59 g4. White can continue ignoring Black's a-pawn, as his own pawns are too far advanced for any possible counterplay to be effective.

55 ... ♘f7
56 ♖a7+?!

After 56 ♖xa5? ♖xa5 57 ♗xa5 ♔f6 Black draws, but again more technical was 56 ♖e6+ (56 ♖g6!?) 56...♔f8 57 ♖e4 ♖a3 58 g4 and the pawns start rolling.

56 ... ♔e8
57 ♖a8+ ♔e7
58 ♖a7+ ♔e8
59 ♖xa5 *(D)*

B



59 ... ♖g4!

59...♖xa5? 60 ♗xa5 ♔e7 61 ♗c3 is hopeless for Black, but after the text-move the blockade is suddenly very real and it's not easy for White to achieve further progress.

60 ♗e1 ♔e7 *(D)*

Black had other options:

1) Insufficient is 60...♘h6 (60...♘g5 61 ♖a6!) 61 ♔e3 ♔f7 (61...♖g5 62 ♔f4 ♖g4+ 63 ♔e5 only activates White's king, while after 61...♔e7 62 ♔f3 ♖g5 63 f6+! ♔xf6 64 ♖xg5 ♔xg5 65 ♗d2+ Black loses the pawn endgame) 62 ♔f3 ♖g5 63 ♔f4 ♖g4+ 64 ♔e5 ♖g5 65 ♖a7+ ♔g8 (65...♔e8 66 ♔e6 and 65...♔f8 66 ♔f6! ♖xf5+ 67 ♔g6 are even simpler) 66 ♔f6! ♖g4 67 ♖c7 ♔h8 68 ♗c3 ♖xg3 69 ♔e6+ and White wins.

2) 60...♘d6!?, with the threat of ...♖g5, is tempting. However, White can nevertheless consolidate after 61 ♖d5 (61 ♔e3? ♖xg3+! 62 ♗xg3 ♘c4+):

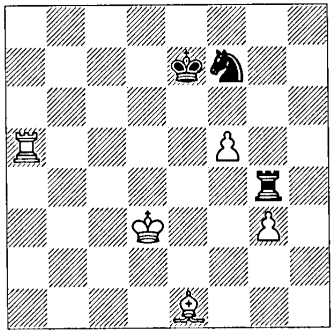
2a) 61...♘f7 62 ♔e3 ♘h6 63 ♖a5! transposes to line '1' (at move 61).

2b) 61...♔d7 is more resilient:

2b1) 62 ♔e3 ♖e4+ 63 ♔f2 ♔c6 64 ♖a5 ♔b6! 65 ♗d2 ♖d4 66 ♖a2 ♖d5! and White loses the f-pawn (66...♘xf5? 67 ♗e3 leads to a lost rook endgame for Black).

2b2) Correct is 62 ♗f2! ♖g5 (62...♔c6 63 ♖c5+ ♔d7 64 ♔e3 doesn't help Black) 63 ♗c5 ♔c6 (63...♖xg3+ 64 ♔d4 ♖g4+ 65 ♔e5 ♖e4+ 66 ♔f6) 64 ♖xd6+ ♔xc5 65 ♖d8 and no matter which pawn Black takes, the resulting endgame is lost for him.

W



61 ♗f2?

This final error throws away all the remaining winning chances. White had two stronger moves:

1) 61 ♖a6 ♘d6! (61...♘g5 62 ♖g6 pins the knight and White will prepare ♗d2 by moving his king; 61...♖g5 62 ♗b4+ ♔d7 63 ♖a7+ ♔e8 64 ♖e7+ ♔f8 65 ♖e4+ ♔g8 66 g4 is also hopeless for Black) 62 f6+ ♔d7 is not too promising for White. Now ...♖g6 is a threat and even after 63 ♔c2!? (best; after 63 ♗f2 ♖g6 64 f7 ♘xf7! 65 ♖xg6 ♘e5+ 66 ♔e4 ♘xg6 67 ♔f5 the simplest draw is 67...♘f8 68 g4 ♔e8!) 63...♘f7 (63...♖g6? 64 f7 ♔e7 65 ♗b4) it's difficult to say if White will be able to break the blockade.

2) A premature advance of the f-pawn is something White should avoid. Thus 61 ♔e3! is best: 61...♘g5 (we already know 61...♘h6 62 ♔f3 ♖g5 63 f6+) 62 ♖a6 (62 ♔f2!? ♖c4 63 ♖a6 is also possible) and after overcoming the technical difficulties White should win:

2a) 62...♘f7 63 ♖e6+ ♔f8 64 ♖e4 dislodges Black's rook.

2b) 62...♔f7 63 ♖g6 ♖e4+ 64 ♔f2 ♖g4 65 ♔f1 and ♗d2.

2c) 62...♖e4+ 63 ♔f2 ♖e5 (63...♘f7 loses to 64 ♗d2 ♘d6 65 ♔f3 ♖d4 66 ♗g5+ and g4) 64 ♗b4+ (64 g4? ♖e4) 64...♔f7 65 ♖a7+ ♔e8 66 ♖a5 again disrupts Black's defences and pushes his forces back.

61 ... ♘g5!

The bishop is misplaced on f2 and Gelfand's tenacity reaps rewards; now the position is a draw. After 61...♔f6, 62 ♗d4+ ♔e7 (62...♔g5? is weak due to 63 ♗e3+ ♔f6 64 ♗f4) 63 ♖a7+ forces the king to the back rank and only complicates Black's task.

62 ♖a6

After 62 ♔e2 ♘e4 63 ♔f3 ♘xf2 64 ♔xf2 ♔f6 65 ♔f3 ♖b4 the blockade is unbreakable. 62 ♔e3 ♖e4+ 63 ♔d2 ♖g4 and 62 ♖b5 ♔f7 are no better, because White can't improve his position.

62 ... ♔f7
63 ♔e2

The alternative 63 ♖g6 runs into the trick 63...♘h3!.

63 ... ♘e4
64 ♖a5

64 ♔e3 (or 64 ♔f3) 64...♘xf2 65 ♔xf2 ♖g5 66 f6 ♔g6 (only not 66...♖f5+ 67 ♔e3 ♖xf6?? 68 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 69 ♔f4) 67 ♔f3 ♖f5+ 68 ♔e4 ♖g5 is a draw. After 64 ♗e1 Black can choose between 64...♘xg3+ 65 ♔f3 ♖g5 or the even better 64...♖xg3 65 ♖e6 ♘c3+.

64 ... ♖g5
65 ♔f3 ♘xf2
66 ♔xf2 ♔f6
½-½

After the f5-pawn falls, both the rook and the pawn endgames are clearly drawn.

Summary

This game demonstrates well the strength of a deeply prepared opening repertoire, together with good understanding of the resulting positions. The notes show that as far as 9 b4 (and especially 13 ♗e3!?) is concerned, Kramnik himself is the book and in the past few years he participated in most of the relevant games in this line. Here he demonstrated an improvement (17 b5!) that created new and serious problems for Black. These increased after a premature release of the central tension with 20...dxc5?!, which allowed White to coordinate his forces ideally. In this sense the move 23 ♕c1! deserves a special mention.

From move 23 onwards Kramnik's pressure grew incessantly; the next critical moment came after 34...c5!?, when White transformed his positional advantage into a material one. This had the usual consequences – Black obtained some activity and White was forced to strive for consolidation. In this phase, when objectively White was close to winning, both sides committed some minor mistakes. As the last one was Black's 41...♖b1+?!, after the time-control he was completely lost. However, his desperate resistance caused White to err, missing first clear technical solutions (49 ♔c1!, 55 ♗f6+, 56 ♖e6+) and finally the win altogether with the unfortunate 61 ♗f2?. However, one must understand that after a six-hour fight and two time-scrambles it's not so easy to find moves such as 61 ♔e3!. The fact that this was by that point the only way to win also shows the extent to which White had ruined his position by allowing Black a foothold between his pawns. In the preceding phase (moves 41-56) he had a great many ways to convert his advantage into victory.

Game 31

Smbat Lputian – Maxim Dlugy

New York Open 1998

Queen's Gambit Accepted [D26]

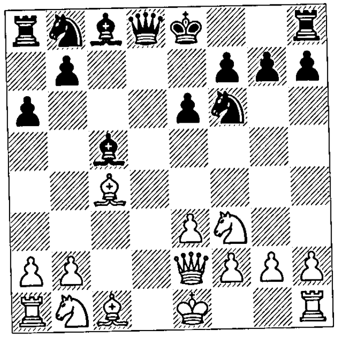
1 d4 d5
2 c4 dxc4
3 e3 e6

The type of position after 3...e5 4 ♗xc4 exd4 5 exd4 can also arise from other openings (notably the Exchange French and Petroff) and is generally considered to be promising for White. One of the reasons is that compared with the more common isolated d4-pawn positions (i.e. with a black pawn on e6 instead of c6) White has use of two outposts – e5 and c5. Also it's more difficult to force simplification on the open e-file than on the c-file.

4 ♗xc4 ♘f6
5 ♘f3 c5
6 ♕e2

An idea introduced into current theory by Karpov's former second GM Furman. The point of this move is to use the extra tempo in a symmetrical position to build up attacking prospects on the kingside by advancing the e-pawn. The text-move also serves the purpose of avoiding an exchange of queens.

6 ... a6
7 dxc5 ♗xc5 *(D)*



8 e4!?

The sharpest. More circumspect is 8 0-0, which quite often comes to the same thing, especially after 8...♕c7 or 8...♘c6. Of independent significance is 8...b5!? 9 ♗d3 (after 9 ♗b3 ♗b7 10 a4 ♘bd7! the key e4-e5 advance is out of the question and White has no more than equality) 9...♘c6 (9...♗b7? loses material to 10 ♗xb5+!), when White must react to the ...♘b4 threat:

1) Rather tame is 10 a3 ♗d6 11 ♖d1 ♗b7 12 b4 ♕c7 13 ♗b2 ♘e5 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♗xe5 (15 ♗xb5+ ♔e7 is OK for Black) 15...♕xe5 16 ♘d2 0-0 17 ♘b3 ♗d5 18 ♘c5 a5!? 19 f4 ♕c7 20 ♗xb5 axb4 21 axb4 ♖xa1 22 ♖xa1 ♖b8 and Black got his pawn back with a quick draw to follow in Malaniuk-Vladimirov, Tashkent 1987.

2) 10 ♘c3 ♗b7 11 a4!? is a less tested but more ambitious try.

8 ... ♕c7

This is one of the main moves. The others are:

1) 8...♘c6 9 e5 ♘g4 10 0-0 and now:

1a) Poor is 10...♘d4?! 11 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 12 ♘d2! ♘xe5 13 ♘b3 ♕xc4 14 ♕xe5 ♗f8 15 ♗e3 ♕d5 16 ♕g3 ♗d6 17 f4, Gelfand-Salov, Madrid 1996; 17...0-0? now virtually loses to 18 ♖fd1 ♕c6 19 ♖ac1 ♕d7 20 ♘c5 ♕e7 21 ♘e4 ♗b8 22 ♔h1! ♗a7 23 f5! exf5 24 ♗h6 g6 25 ♕c3 f6 26 ♗xf8, and otherwise Black's centralized king will cause permanent trouble.

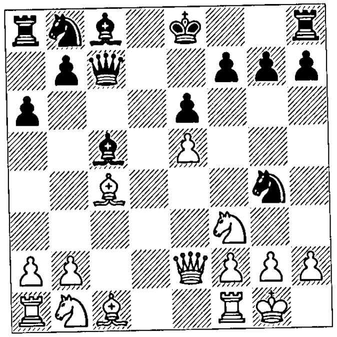
1b) 10...♕c7 transposes to the note to Black's 10th move, which favours White.

2) That leads us to the most sedate and probably safest alternative, 8...b5!? 9 ♗d3 (after 9 ♗b3 ♗b7 10 e5?! ♘g4 11 0-0 ♘d7 the e5-pawn is more of a liability than an asset) 9...♘c6 10 ♘bd2 e5! 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♘b3 ♗b6. Here there is only a minimum of excitement left; Black has already more or less equalized.

9 e5

9 0-0 is too soft: 9...♘g4 10 ♗g5 ♘c6 11 ♘bd2 ♗d6 12 h3 h6 13 ♗h4 ♘ge5 14 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♘f3 g5! 16 ♗g3 ♗xg3 17 fxg3 ♕xg3 18 ♖ad1 g4 19 hxg4 ♗d7 20 b4 b5 21 ♗d5 ♖g8 and Black has little to fear in this sharp position, I.Farago-Zsu.Polgar, Hungarian Ch (Budapest) 1991.

9 ... ♘g4
10 0-0 *(D)*



10 ... ♘xf2!?

Although this simple and seemingly very strong combination is Black's best option, it's

in fact quite risky. Less ambitious is 10...♘c6 11 ♗f4 f6 12 ♘bd2 ♘gxe5 13 ♘xe5 fxe5 (worse is 13...♘xe5?! 14 ♖ac1) 14 ♗g3 (14 ♗e3 ♗d4!? is unconvincing for White) 14...0-0 and now:

1) 15 ♘f3 ♘d4 16 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 17 ♖ac1 ♕a5 18 ♖ce1 ♕c5 19 ♗d3 ♗d7 20 ♗xe5 (20 ♕h5 ♖f5!) 20...♗xe5 21 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 22 ♖xe5 ♖ac8 and in Stohl-Mikhalchishin, Dortmund open 1992, Black held this slightly inferior endgame.

2) 15 ♖ac1! is an improvement. If Black attempts to transpose to line '1' with 15...♕b6 16 ♗d3 ♗d4 17 ♘c4 (17 ♕h5 g6 18 ♗xg6 hxg6 19 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 is only a draw) 17...♕c7 18 ♖ce1 (18 ♗e4!?) 18...♗d7, White has 19 ♕c2!? (19 ♘xe5 will transpose to line '1'), when the double threats ♗xh7+ and ♘xe5 give him an advantage.

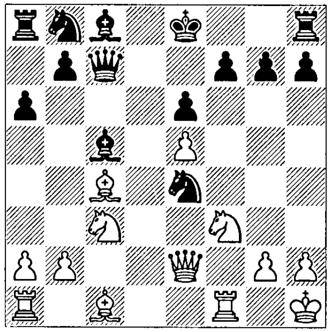
11 b4!?

An inspired novelty. Let's look at the previous attempts:

1) After 11 ♗e3? ♘g4 12 ♗xc5 ♕xc5+ 13 ♔h1 ♘c6 14 ♘c3 ♘gxe5 15 ♘e4 ♕e7 White is simply two pawns down without any substantial compensation.

2) Nobody has ever tested the old recommendation 11 ♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 12 ♔xf2 b5 13 b3!?, when a debate about White's attacking chances after 13...bxc4 14 ♗a3 is rather academic, as even the less greedy option 13...0-0!? 14 ♗a3 bxc4 15 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 promises Black a fine position.

3) The main line was considered to be Ivan Sokolov's 11 ♘c3 ♘e4+ 12 ♔h1 *(D)*, and now:



3a) 12...♘f2+? 13 ♖xf2 ♗xf2 14 ♘e4 ♗c5 15 ♗e3 (15 ♗g5!?) 15...♗e7 16 ♗g5 0-0 17 ♘f6+ gxf6 18 exf6 ♗d6 19 ♗d3 is a considerably inferior version of the game position for Black; after 19...♕a5 20 ♕f2 ♕b4, 21 ♗h6! with the threat ♘g5 decides.

3b) 12...♘xc3 13 bxc3 ♘d7! (Black has to attack the e5 outpost; other moves enable White to concentrate his forces on the kingside without hindrance; e.g., 13...b5 14 ♗b3 h6 15 ♘d4 ♕e7 16 ♕g4 g6 17 ♗e3 h5 18 ♕h3 ♖a7 19 ♖f6 0-0 20 ♖af1 ♗xd4 21 ♗xd4 ♖c7 22 ♕e3 ♔g7 23 ♗c2 with a powerful attack for White, I.Sokolov-Ki.Georgiev, Tilburg KO rpd 1994) 14 ♘g5 ♕xe5 15 ♕h5 g6 16 ♕f3 ♕g7 17 ♘xf7 0-0 18 ♘h6+ (18 ♗xe6? loses a piece after 18...♘e5!) 18...♔h8 and White has no more than a perpetual.

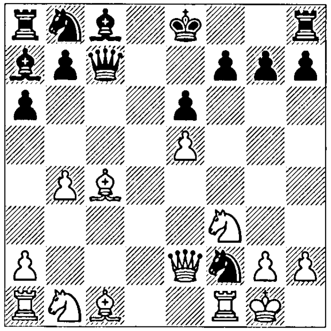
11 ... ♘h3++!?

Although risky, objectively this move can't be condemned. The only real alternative is to retreat the bishop:

1) 11...♘d3+? loses immediately to 12 bxc5 ♕xc5+ 13 ♗e3 ♕xc4 14 ♖c1.

2) 11...♗b6 12 ♘bd2! (12 ♗e3?!, as in line '3b', is ineffective due to 12...♘g4 13 ♗xb6 ♕xb6+ 14 ♔h1 ♘e3) 12...♘g4+ 13 ♔h1 ♘e3 14 ♖e1 0-0 (14...♘c2?! is playing with fire in view of 15 ♘e4 ♘xa1 16 ♘d6+) 15 ♗d3 enables White to retain attacking prospects, as 15...♘c2? fails to 16 ♕e4.

3) 11...♗a7!? *(D)* seems a somewhat better choice:



3a) 12 ♘bd2 b5!? 13 ♖xf2 bxc4 14 ♘e4 0-0 (14...♗xf2+? 15 ♕xf2 is very risky for Black; Khuzman shows that White wins nicely after 15...0-0 16 ♘f6+! gxf6 17 ♗h6 ♔h8 18 ♗xf8 ♘d7 19 ♗h6 ♘xe5 20 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 21 ♖e1 ♕c3

22 ♗c1!) 15 ♗e3 ♘c6 hardly gives White enough for the pawn.

3b) More enterprising is 12 ♗e3!? ♗xe3 13 ♕xe3 ♘g4 (13...♕xc4? loses to 14 ♖c1, while after 13...b5 14 ♗xb5+ axb5 15 ♖xf2 White is slightly better, as the b5-pawn is sensitive) 14 ♕g5! (14 ♕f4 ♕b6+ 15 ♘d4 ♘xe5! 16 ♕xe5 ♘c6 is clearly bad for White, while 14 ♕d4 is also unconvincing due to 14...h5 with the threat ...♘c6). Now Black has a wider choice:

3b1) 14...♕b6+?! 15 ♔h1 ♘f2+ 16 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 17 ♕xg7 ♖f8 18 ♘bd2 gives White a tremendous attack for a mere exchange.

3b2) 14...♕xc4 15 ♘bd2! (after 15 ♖c1?!, if Black feels that 15...♕xb4 16 ♕xg4 ♕xg4 17 ♖xc8+ is not sufficiently clear, he can play 15...♕e2!? 16 ♖xc8+ ♔d7 with a healthy extra pawn) 15...♕xb4 16 ♕xg7 ♖f8 17 ♘c4! ♕c5+ 18 ♔h1 ♕xc4 (18...♘f2+ 19 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 20 ♖d1! wins for White) 19 ♖fc1 ♘e3 20 ♖xc4 ♘xc4 21 ♘g5 with approximately level material and a continuing attack for White.

3b3) 14...f5! 15 exf6 ♘xf6 is the strongest. Black will finish his development with ...0-0, and White will have at best equality even if he regains the weak e6-pawn.

12 ♔h1 ♘f2+
13 ♖xf2

White hasn't gone through all this trouble just to draw by 13 ♔g1.

13 ... ♗xf2
14 ♘bd2 ♗a7

Black quite logically decides to keep the ...b5 possibility, as in none of the following lines would 14...♗b6 significantly change the evaluation. The immediate interpolation of 14...b5? 15 ♗d3 only chases White's bishop to an attacking diagonal; then the onslaught after 15...♗b6 16 ♘e4 0-0 17 ♘f6+! gxf6 18 exf6 ♖d8 (after 18...♗b7 19 ♘e5 or 18...♘d7 19 ♕d2 the exposed king becomes easy prey) 19 ♘e5 ♔f8 20 ♗h6+ ♔e8 21 ♖c1! ♕d6 22 ♕h5 ♖a7 23 ♕g5 ♘d7 24 ♘xf7! becomes decisive.

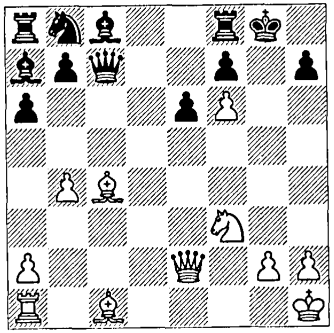
15 ♘e4 0-0
16 ♘f6+?!

White bravely goes for the kill. With hindsight it's easy to criticize his decision and recommend the less committal 16 ♗d3!? ♘d7 17 ♗b2, which retains practical chances for the invested material.

16 ... gxf6

Forced. 16...♔h8? 17 ♘g5 gxf6 (17...♖d8 18 ♕h5 h6 19 ♗f4! ♖f8 20 ♘ge4 and 17...h6 18 ♕e4 g6 19 ♕h4 allow White to break through via h6) 18 exf6 ♘d7 (18...♖g8 19 ♕h5 doesn't help Black) 19 ♕e4 ♘xf6 20 ♗b2 leads to mate.

17 exf6 *(D)*



White has sacrificed a whole rook and has a dangerous attack. It's no wonder that in this tense situation Black loses his way; his next move is already the decisive mistake.

17 ... ♘d7?

Dlugy's attempt to get rid of the nasty f6-pawn fails, as his king doesn't get out of the danger zone in time. 17...♔h8? loses to 18 ♘g5, as this transposes to the note to Black's 16th move, while 17...♕d8 is also insufficient due to 18 ♗b2 ♘d7 19 ♕d2 ♔h8 20 ♕h6 ♖g8 21 ♗d3 ♘f8 22 ♘e5 ♕e8 23 ♕h5, when White wins.

The correct defence is 17...♖d8!, which gives rise to fascinating and rich tactical lines. Black frees f8 for his king and targets the weak back rank, threatening ...♕xc4 at the same time. White has numerous possibilities:

1) Burning bridges with 18 ♘e5? gets him nowhere after 18...♕xe5 19 ♕g4+ ♔f8 20 ♗h6+ ♔e8 21 ♕g8+ ♔d7 22 ♕xf7+ (22 ♖d1+ ♗d4) 22...♔c6 23 ♖c1 ♗e3.

2) 18 ♗b3 is too slow: 18...♘d7 19 ♕d2 (19 ♗g5!? is possibly better) 19...♔f8! (19...♔h8? loses to 20 ♕h6 ♖g8 21 ♘g5 ♘f8 22 ♗f4!) and, compared with the game, Black has an important extra tempo, which helps him to beat off the attack: 20 ♗xe6 (20 ♕h6+ ♔e8 21 ♗f4 ♕c3 is insufficient for White) 20...♘e5! 21 ♕h6+ ♔e8.

3) 18 ♗d3 and now:

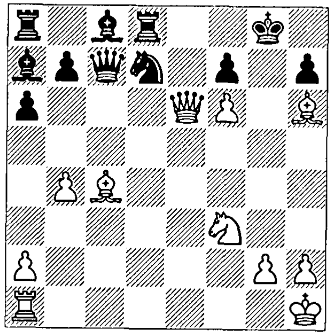
3a) 18...♘d7?! is definitely playing with fire due to 19 ♗xh7+! ♔h8 (forced; both 19...♔xh7 20 ♕e4+ and 19...♔f8? 20 ♗h6+ ♔e8 21 ♕xe6+! lead to mate) 20 ♗d3 ♘xf6 21 ♗b2 followed by ♖f1.

3b) More logical is 18...♖xd3 19 ♕xd3 ♘d7 (19...♕d7!? is also playable) 20 ♕d2 ♔f8 with similar intentions to those in line '2' – escape and win.

4) 18 ♗b2 allows the black queen to join the defence: 18...♕f4 19 ♖f1 (19 ♘e5 ♖d2 20 ♕h5 ♕xf6) 19...♕e3! 20 ♕c2 ♕h6 21 ♘e5 ♘c6.

5) The paradoxical 18 ♘g1 also seems insufficient since after 18...♔h8 (18...♖d4 19 ♕h5 ♘d7 20 ♕g5+ ♔f8 21 ♗xe6! is less clear) 19 ♗h6 ♖g8!? White misses the knight in the attack.

6) All the lines below under '7' indicate that after the natural 18 ♗h6 Black must attack f6 with 18...♘d7 19 ♕xe6 *(D)* (19 ♕d2 ♘f8 and 19 ♕e4 ♘xf6 20 ♕h4 ♘e8 are both unprofitable for White), when White's queen is obviously untouchable. Black has a choice of knight moves:



6a) 19...♘b6?! 20 ♕e3 ♗f5 21 ♗f8 (Black just about defends after 21 ♕g5+!? ♗g6 22 ♗f8 ♕b8! 23 ♗e7 ♖d6! with the idea that 24 ♕h6 is answered by 24...♖xf6 25 ♗xf6 ♕f8) 21...♕xc4 (21...♔xf8 is weaker since Black's whole kingside falls after 22 ♖e1! ♗e6 23 ♕h6+) 22 ♕g5+ ♔xf8 23 ♕g7+ ♔e8 24 ♘e5 leads to a fantastic position where Black must return all his booty with interest: 24...♘d7 25 ♘xc4 ♘f8 26 ♘e5 ♖d7 (26...♗e6 is even worse due to 27 ♘xf7!) 27 ♖e1 ♗e6 and White can claim an advantage due to his safer king.

6b) 19...♘c5 20 ♕e3 ♘e6 (20...♗f5 21 bxc5 ♕xc5 22 ♘e5! and the attack decides) 21 ♕e4 ♗d4 (21...♔h8? 22 ♗d3! ♖xd3 23 ♘g5 mates; the same goes for 21...♘d4? 22 ♘xd4 ♕xc4 23 ♕e3 ♗f5 24 ♘xf5! ♗xe3 25 ♘e7+) 22 ♗d3 (22 ♕g4+ ♔h8 23 ♗g7+ is an immediate draw; this motif also occurs in several branches of line '7') 22...♘f8 23 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 24 ♘xd4 ♕d6 and White doesn't have more than a perpetual after the continuation 25 ♖f1 ♕xd4 26 ♕xh7 ♔e8 27 ♗b5+ axb5 28 ♕g8+ ♔d7 29 ♕xf7+ ♔c6 30 ♖c1+.

6c) 19...♘f8! is the correct defence. Now 20 ♕e7 (20 ♕e4 ♘g6!? 21 ♘g5 ♗f5 22 ♗xf7+ ♕xf7 23 ♕xf5 ♖d5 is insufficient for White) 20...♕xc4 (20...♘e6 21 ♗xe6 ♕xe7 22 fxe7 ♖e8 23 ♗xc8 ♖axc8 is unconvincing in view of 24 ♗f8 or 24 ♗g5) 21 ♕xd8 ♗h3! 22 ♕xa8 ♗xg2+ 23 ♔xg2 ♕c2+ 24 ♔g3 ♗f2+ 25 ♔f4 (both 25 ♔g2 ♗e1+ and 25 ♔g4 ♕c4+ 26 ♗f4 ♕e6+ 27 ♔g5 h6+ lead to White being mated) 25...♕e3+ 26 ♔f5 ♕xf3+ is hopeless for White; he'll lose his bishop as 27 ♗f4 ♕d3+ 28 ♔e5 (28 ♔g4 h5+) 28...♗d4+ 29 ♔d6 ♗b6+ concludes the king-hunt.

I started analysing the position after 17...♖d8! with the firm conviction that White must be winning; one only has to find how. A long time later I understood the matter was far from clear, while *Fritz* was also at a loss, as is often the case with positional sacrifices.

7) White's idea seemed too attractive to be just plainly incorrect, and in the process of elimination and a gradual change of attitude to the position I finally tried 18 ♗g5!?. White protects f6 and depending on the circumstances plans ♘e5 or ♕e4-g4/h4. Then:

7a) 18...♘d7 19 ♕e4 ♘f8? (Black's defensive idea from line '6') fails to 20 ♕h4! e5 21 ♕h6 ♘e6 22 ♗xe6 fxe6 23 ♘xe5 ♖d7 24 ♕h5 ♖f7 25 ♖d1, when the threat ♖d8+! decides.

7b) 18...♕d6 19 ♘e5 (19 ♕e4!?) 19...♘c6 (19...♗d4? is met by 20 ♗h6!, while 19...♕f8 20 ♕g4 ♔h8 21 ♗h6 prosaically mates Black; 19...♕d4 20 ♖f1 with ♘xf7! in the air is no help to Black either) and now White wins nicely after 20 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 21 ♕h5+ ♔g8 22 ♖f1 ♔h8 (22...♗f2 23 f7+ ♔g7 24 ♕h6+ ♔xf7 25 ♕xh7+ ♔e8 26 ♖xf2 and White wins) 23 f7 e5 24 ♗e6! ♕xe6 25 f8♕+ ♖xf8 26 ♖xf8+ ♔g7 27 ♗h6+! ♕xh6 28 ♕f7#.

7c) Interesting is 18...b5!? 19 ♗b3 (this patient move is necessary; the 'brilliant' 19 ♘e5?! works nicely after 19...bxc4? 20 ♗h6 ♖d4 21 ♕h5 ♕xe5 22 ♕xe5 ♖g4 23 ♕c7, but 19...♘c6! 20 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 21 ♕g4 h5 22 ♕xh5 ♗b7 23 ♗f1 ♕e4 spoils the fun) and now:

7c1) 19...♗b7?! 20 ♘e5 and now Black is in trouble after 20...♘c6 21 ♗f4 or 20...♔f8 21 ♕h5 ♗e4 22 ♗xe6 ♗xg2+ 23 ♔xg2 ♕c2+ 24 ♔h3 ♖d3+ 25 ♘f3!. The superior 20...♕c3!? was suggested by the *Ceskoslovensky Sach* reader Mr Svanda, who however refuted it himself by 21 ♖c1 ♕h3 22 ♖c7 ♘d7! (22...♕f5? 23 ♘xf7) 23 ♖xb7 ♕f5 24 ♘xf7! ♕b1+ (24...♔xf7 is worse due to 25 h4!, freeing h2 for the king) 25 ♗d1 ♔xf7 26 ♕d2 ♔g6 27 ♗h6! (27 h4 ♘xf6 and now 28 h5+? loses trivially to 28...♘xh5 29 ♗xd8 ♘g3+, while after the tempting 28 ♕c2+ Black has the fantastic 28...♘e4!!, followed by ...♖xd1+ or ...♕xd1+) 27...♗e3 (forced) 28 ♗xe3 ♘xf6 and after either 29 ♕c2+ or even 29 ♗d4!? White's attack is worth more than the exchange.

7c2) 19...♘c6 is a better move:

7c21) After 20 ♗h6 ♗b7! (20...e5?! is very risky due to 21 ♖c1!, threatening ♖xc6 and ♗xf7+) 21 ♕e1 (Black defends after 21 ♕e4 ♘e7! 22 ♕xe6 ♘g6) Black doesn't have to force a draw (by 21...♘d4 22 ♕h4 ♘f5 23 ♕g4+), as he has some interesting winning attempts:

7c211) 21...♗d4 22 ♕h4 (22 ♗c2 ♘e7!? and now 23 ♖c1 ♗xf3 24 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 25 ♖xc7 ♗xf6 gives Black a technically won position and 23 fxe7 ♕xc2 a clear advantage) 22...♘e7 23 fxe7 (23 ♘xd4? ♘g6) 23...♗xa1 24 ♗f4! ♖d1+ (the only way to play on; after 24...♕d7, 25 ♕g3+ ♔h8 26 ♗e5+ forces a draw) 25 ♗xd1 ♕c4 26 ♕g3+ ♗g7 27 h3. The e7-pawn is a serious thorn in Black's flesh and after 27...♗xf3 (not 27...♕f1+?, when 28 ♔h2 ♕d3 29 ♗b8 ♗c6 30 ♗c2! ♕xc2 31 ♘d4 wins the black queen; after 27...♕d3?! 28 ♗e5 ♕g6 29 ♗b8 Black has nothing better than the piece sacrifice 29...♕xg3) 28 ♗b8!? (even 28 ♗xf3 ♖e8 29 ♗d6 is possible; Black has difficulties untangling himself) 28...♗c6 29 ♗f3 Black is unable to prevent ♗e5 with a drawn opposite-coloured bishop endgame; e.g., 29...f6 30 ♕d6 ♖xb8 31 ♕xb8+ ♔f7 32 e8♕+.

7c212) More promising seems 21...♖d4!? 22 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 23 ♖c1 ♗xg2+ 24 ♔xg2 ♕b7+ 25 ♔h3 ♕f3+ 26 ♕g3+ ♕xg3+ 27 hxg3, but even here White retains drawing chances.

7c22) White should play 20 ♕e4 ♘d4 21 ♗h6 (weak are 21 ♕g4? e5 and 21 ♘xd4? ♖xd4 22 ♕xa8 ♗b8!), when Black has a choice:

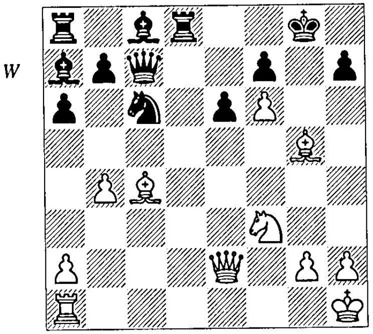
7c221) 21...e5? is too ambitious: 22 ♘xd4 (22 ♖c1? loses to 22...♕xc1+ 23 ♗xc1 ♘xb3) 22...♖xd4 (22...exd4? 23 ♗c2 mates; after 22...♗xd4 23 ♖f1! the threats of ♗c2 and ♕h4 are decisive) 23 ♕xa8 and while material is now equal, Black's problems are far from over; e.g., 23...♕b7 24 ♕xb7 ♗xb7 25 ♗e3.

7c222) Better is the modest 21...♘f5 22 ♕g4+ ♔h8, with a draw.

7c23) If White wants more, a plausible try is 20 ♖c1!?, but it's practically impossible to exhaust the position analytically.

7c3) The bad news for White starts with 19...♘d7!. The defensive idea that didn't work in line '7a' is now effective and there seems to be no clear way to continue the attack; e.g., 20 ♕e4 ♗b7 21 ♕g4 ♗xf3 22 gxf3 ♘e5 23 ♕g3 ♕b7!.

7d) Another way to repulse White's threats is the natural developing move 18...♘c6! *(D)*:



7d1) 19 ♗h6?! is insufficient:

7d11) 19...♘d4? loses to 20 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 21 ♕h5.

7d12) 19...e5?! is also not ideal:

7d121) 20 ♕e4 ♘d4 21 ♕h4! (21 ♘xe5 is met not by 21...♗f5?, when 22 ♕f4 ♗g6?! 23 ♘xg6 ♕xf4 24 ♘e7+ mates, but 21...♖e8!, beating off the attack) 21...♘f5 (21...♗f5? loses to 22 ♘xe5!) 22 ♕g5+ ♔h8 23 ♗xf7!? (23 ♗g7+ draws; White strives for more) 23...♕xf7 24 ♘xe5 ♖f8! (the only move; 24...♕g8? loses to 25 ♗g7+!) 25 ♘xf7+ ♖xf7 26 ♗g7+ ♔g8!? and White should now give a perpetual.

7d122) Better is 20 ♘g5!; after 20...♘d4 21 ♗xf7+ ♕xf7 22 ♘xf7 ♘xe2 23 ♘xd8 ♗e6 24 ♘xe6 ♔f7 25 ♖f1! White retains the extra pawn and winning chances.

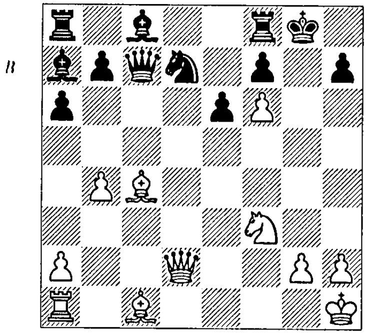
7d13) However, these are just fairy tales, as the aforementioned diligent reader correctly pointed out that 19...♗d4! 20 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 21 ♕h5 ♕e5 beats off the attack.

7d2) 19 ♕e4 is more testing:

7d21) After 19...♘d4, the most practical is 20 ♗h6 (even 20 ♗d3 ♘f5 21 ♗h6! ♕g3!? 22 hxg3 ♘xg3+ 23 ♔h2 ♘xe4 24 ♗xe4 ♗d4 25 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 26 ♖e1 e5 27 ♖e3 ♗g4 28 ♗xb7 is possible; here a draw is the most likely result, as Black's king still remains trapped), when the only attempt to avoid an immediate perpetual, 20...e5, transposes to line '7d121'.

7d22) 19...e5 20 ♕h4 ♕d6! (20...♘d4? loses to 21 ♘xd4 and ♕h6) is the main problem from White's viewpoint. Black wants to play ...♗f5 and is also ready to escape with his king after 21 g4 ♘d4 22 ♗d3 ♔f8 23 ♕xh7 ♔e8.

18 ♕d2! *(D)*



18 ... ♖d8

The double threat is decisive. 18...♘xf6 19 ♕g5+ ♔h8 20 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 21 ♗h6 and 18...♘e5 19 ♕h6 both lead to Black being mated. The only other defensive alternative, 18...♔h8 19 ♕h6 ♖g8 20 ♘g5 ♘f8 21 ♗d3 ♕d7 (21...♗b8 22 ♗f4! is similar) 22 ♘xh7 (22 ♗f4 wins as well) 22...♖g6 23 ♕xf8+ ♖g8 (23...♔xh7 24 ♕g7#) 24 ♕h6 ♖g6 25 ♕h5, is also hopeless for Black.

19 ♕g5+ ♔f8

20 ♗f4 ♕c6

Other grim possibilities are 20...♕xc4 21 ♗d6+ ♔e8 22 ♕g8+ ♘f8 23 ♕xf8+ ♔d7 24 ♘e5# and 20...♕b6 21 ♕g7+ ♔e8 22 ♘g5.

21 ♖d1

Stylishly activating his last piece, but White already has more than one road to victory. The mundane 21 ♕g7+ ♔e8 22 ♘g5 ♘e5 23 ♗xe5 is also sufficient.

21 ... ♘xf6

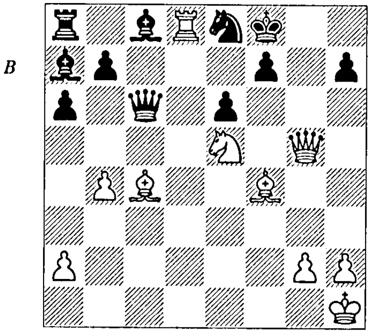
After 21...b5 22 ♕g7+ ♔e8 the quickest is 23 ♖xd7! with mate next move.

22 ♖xd8+ ♘e8

22...♔e7 23 ♗e5 (23 ♗d6+ is also winning) 23...♔xd8 24 ♗xf6+ ♔c7 25 ♗d8+! mates as well.

23 ♘e5 *(D)*

More brutal and direct was 23 ♕h6+ ♔e7 (23...♔g8 24 ♗d6) 24 ♗g5+ f6 25 ♗xf6+ ♘xf6 26 ♕f8#. Still, the text-move also forces resignation.



1-0

23...♕a4 (23...♕e4 24 ♘d7+ ♗xd7 25 ♗d6#) 24 ♕h5! is curtains.

Summary

In this game a very large part of the excitement stayed behind the scenes. White prepared an unbelievably complicated and risky sacrificial line. Objectively the whole idea promises little and Black could have curbed Lputian's attacking ambitions immediately with the more circumspect 11...♗a7!?. Usually it's a good practical idea to try to release the tension after a surprising novelty, not striving to refute it outright (Anatoly Karpov is a past master of this approach).

After 11...♘h3++!? the position quickly became razor-sharp and especially with the objectively incorrect 16 ♘f6+?! acquired a do-or-die character. At the 2000 Olympiad in Istanbul, Lputian told the author that White has a guaranteed draw even after the critical 17...♖d8!. However, he didn't specify how and it remains a mystery, as he has never published any analysis of the game and 11 b4!? hasn't appeared on the scene since. However, White's practical instinct was correct; wading through all the tactics proved to be an insurmountable task for Dlugy, who nowadays plays only a few games a year. General considerations are not worth much in the position after 17 exf6, but one remark at least is pertinent – in such situations one should realize what the opponent's main attacking ideas are and try to prevent as many of them as possible. Nearly all the lines above show that Black's king can't survive in the corner; he acutely needs an escape-route. 17...♘d7? denied him the f8-square for one move too long, and afterwards White's win was rather simple. On the other hand, the multi-purpose 17...♖d8! would have severely tested White's creativity just in order to keep the game going.

Game 32

Michal Krasenkow – Matthias Wahls

Bundesliga 1997/8

Bogo-Indian Defence [E11]

1 d4 ♘f6
2 ♘f3 e6
3 c4 ♗b4+
4 ♘bd2

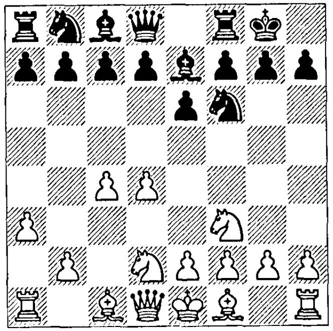
White intends to gain either time or the bishop-pair with a later a3. This move offers approximately the same chances for an opening advantage as the alternative continuation 4 ♗d2.

4 ... 0-0

At this point Black has to make an important decision, which greatly influences the character of the game. The text-move is played rarely nowadays and even Wahls, one of its most ardent supporters, has switched to other openings altogether. 4...c5 5 a3 ♗xd2+ 6 ♕xd2 doesn't have a very good reputation, while according to the current state of theory 4...d5 5 ♕a4+! ♘c6 6 a3 ♗xd2+ (6...♗e7 7 e3 0-0 8 ♕c2 isn't ideal either) 7 ♗xd2 ♘e4 8 ♖d1 doesn't completely solve Black's problems either. A less tested continuation is 4...d6, planning a transition into King's Indian pawn-structures by preparing ...e5. However, by far the most popular and arguably the best move is 4...b6, when White's two main attempts to fight for an edge are 5 a3 ♗xd2+ 6 ♗xd2 (6 ♕xd2!?) 6...♗b7 7 ♗g5 and 5 e3 ♗b7 6 ♗d3 0-0 7 0-0.

5 a3 ♗e7 *(D)*

5...♗xd2+ 6 ♗xd2 b6 7 ♗g5! is less appealing for Black, as counterplay based on ...h6 and ...g5, which is possible in the 4...b6 line, would now seriously compromise Black's kingside.



6 b4!?

At the time the game was played, this was a relatively fresh new idea. Both 6 e3 and 6 g3 are too soft, so White's efforts concentrated mainly on the more ambitious 6 e4 d5 7 e5 (less dangerous is 7 ♕c2 dxe4 8 ♘xe4 ♘c6! 9 ♗d3 ♘xe4 10 ♗xe4 ♘xd4 11 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 12 ♗e3 ♕e5 13 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 14 ♗d3 as in Bareev-Adams, Dortmund 1992, when the solid move 14...♗d7 would have been more or less equal) 7...♘fd7 (7...♘e4?! is weaker due to 8 ♕c2 f5 9 exf6 ♘xf6 10 ♗d3) 8 cxd5 exd5 9 b4! (White does best to limit Black's queenside play; after the seemingly more natural 9 ♗d3 c5 10 0-0 ♘c6 11 ♖e1 a5!? Black develops freely and gets enough counterchances) 9...a5 10 b5 c5 11 ♗d3 cxd4 12 ♘b3 a4 13 ♘bxd4 ♘c5. Wahls had earlier achieved this position in at least three games and he never experienced any problems after meek moves such as 14 0-0 or 14 h3. However, the most natural continuation is 14 ♗c2, preserving the active bishop and giving White a pleasant position.

6 ... d5

Black logically prevents the aforementioned central expansion. After the weaker 6...b6 7 e4 d5 8 e5 ♘fd7 White can achieve an advantageous version of the 6 e4 line by 9 cxd5! (9 ♗d3 c5 10 dxc5 bxc5 11 b5 f6 12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 ♖b1 a6 14 bxa6 ♘c6 is less consistent and unclear, Krasenkow-Aleksandrov, Moscow PCA rpd 1996) 9...exd5 10 ♕b3 ♗b7 11 ♗d3 ♖e8 12 0-0 ♘f8 13 ♖e1 c6 14 ♘f1 ♘e6 15 ♘e3 g6 16 ♗b2 a6 17 ♗f1 ♘d7 18 a4 ♘df8 19 ♖ed1 with an imposing space advantage and attacking chances for White, Chuchelov-Makarov, Novosibirsk 1989.

7 ♕c2

This is the most flexible continuation. 7 e3 leads to a position that arises more often via the 4...d5 5 e3 0-0 move-order. As White sometimes advantageously plays e4, the text-move can save him a tempo. 7 c5 is also interesting; then White doesn't have to fear 7...♘e4 8 ♕c2 f5?! since he has an edge after 9 e3. Nevertheless, the immediate release of the central tension is rather committal.

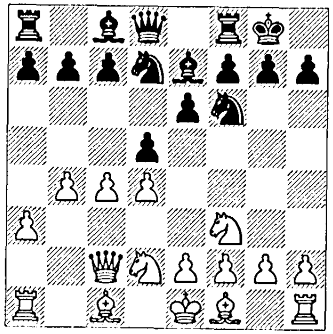
7 ... ♘bd7 *(D)*

This passive reaction gives White a permanent space advantage. Other ideas:

1) The aggressive attempt to break up White's queenside pawn-chain by 7...a5 is questionable: 8 b5 dxc4 (after 8...c5 9 cxd5 ♕xd5 10 e4 ♕h5 11 ♗e2 Black has problems with developing his queenside; 8...c6 9 bxc6 ♘xc6 10 e3 is also good for White) 9 e4!? (9 ♘xc4 c6 is less promising for White,. as Black's lead in development gives him counterplay) 9...c6 10 ♗xc4 and White is better thanks to his pawn-centre.

2) 7...c6 is more patient, and preferable. Then 8 c5 (more ambitious, but also more risky is 8 e4 dxe4 9 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 10 ♕xe4 a5 11 ♖b1) 8...a5 9 ♗b2 b6 leads to a similar position to later in the game.

3) 7...b6 (also preferable to the text-move) 8 c5 (otherwise Black can play ...c5) 8...c6 (8...a5?! is weaker, as after 9 b5 c6 10 a4 Black can't resolve the tension adequately and White will be able to support his advanced pawns by ♗a3, ♖c1, ♘b3, etc.) 9 a4 ♕c7!?. White is still behind in development and Black has counterplay involving a timely ...a5 or even ...e5 break.



8 c5!

This move cramps Black and gives White chances to play on both flanks. The liberating ...e5 is now practically out of the question. 8 e4 is less consistent and gives Black counterplay after 8...dxe4 9 ♘xe4 b6.

8 ... c6
9 e3

However, this is too tame. The time was ripe for 9 e4!. After 9...dxe4 10 ♘xe4 Black gets a position structurally similar to the one he could have achieved later by 19...dxe4, but with an important difference – here he is saddled with the passive bishop on c8.

9 ... ♕c7
10 ♗b2 b6
11 ♗d3 bxc5?!

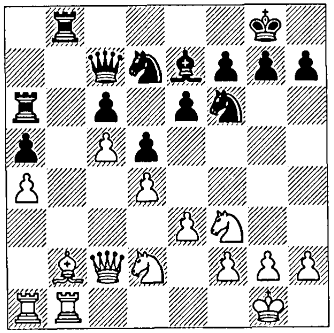
There was no need to hurry; 11...a5 12 0-0 ♗a6 is more flexible. After the exchange of the light-squared bishops, Black can himself choose how and when to resolve the queenside tension. In this case White's advantage would be infinitesimal at best.

12 bxc5 a5
13 0-0 ♗a6

14 ♗xa6 ♖xa6
15 a4! ♖b8

The more active 15...e5!? works tactically, but after 16 ♘xe5 (16 dxe5 ♘g4 17 ♕f5?! is inferior due to the reply 17...♘h6) 16...♘xe5 17 dxe5 ♘d7 18 ♗d4 ♘xe5 19 ♕c3 (19 ♖ab1!?) 19...♘g4 (after 19...♗f6 20 e4!? White threatens f4 and e5) 20 ♘f3 ♗f6 21 ♖ab1 White retains an edge.

16 ♖fb1 *(D)*



The opening is over and in addition to his space advantage, White also controls the b-file. Only one of Black's rooks can participate in the fight for the only open file, as the black a-pawn is vulnerable to attack (♗c3, ♘b3 and ♕d2).

16 ... ♕c8
17 ♗c3 ♖xb1+
18 ♖xb1 ♗d8
19 e4

Instead of this direct move, Krasenkow recommends the subtler 19 ♘e1!?. The idea is to prepare the central expansion gradually; after 19...♗c7 20 ♘d3 ♖a7 21 f3 ♕e8 22 ♕b2! (22 e4 is weaker due to 22...dxe4 23 fxe4 e5) the ...e5 break is stopped and White is better.

19 ... ♖a7?!

Wahls again reacts passively at another important moment. Although 19...dxe4 20 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 21 ♕xe4 followed by ♘d2-c4 allows White to retain his pull, Black would have had more counterchances than in the game.

20 e5

Krasenkow doesn't hesitate to increase his space advantage.

20 ... ♘h5

20...♘e8 is more solid.

21 ♘b3

The threat is ♕d2, simultaneously attacking a5 and h5 (g4 wins the knight).

21 ... ♕a6
22 ♗d2 f5
23 exf6?!

This is a logical attempt to open up the kingside with Black's major pieces tied down on the opposite flank. However, it squanders most of White's advantage, as Black gains breathing space for his forces. Black remains boxed in without effective counterplay after 23 h3 g6 24 g4 (or even 24 ♗g5!?).

23 ... gxf6!

Central control is important. 23...♘hxf6 is weaker due to 24 ♗f4.

24 ♘c1

This allows Black to exchange his passive rook. Therefore 24 ♖e1!? ♘f8 (24...♕c4 25 ♕xc4 dxc4 26 ♘a1 saddles Black with another weakness on c4) 25 ♗h6 deserved attention; then White has more attacking chances than he gets in the game.

24 ... ♗c7

24...♖b7?! 25 ♖xb7 ♕xb7 26 ♘b3 costs Black a pawn.

25 ♘d3 ♖b7

The line 25...e5? 26 dxe5 fxe5 27 ♘fxe5! ♘xe5 28 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 29 ♕f5 shows that Black must be very careful about opening the position prematurely.

26 ♖xb7

After 26 ♖e1 White must seriously reckon with 26...♕c4!.

26 ... ♕xb7
27 g4

The a-pawn already isn't worth the invested time; after 27 ♘c1?! ♘g7 28 ♘b3 ♕a6 29 ♕c3 e5 30 ♘xa5 ♘e6 the initiative passes to Black, and in any case White can't retain his booty for long.

27 ... ♘g7
28 ♗h6

The immediate 28 g5?! allows the reply 28...♘f5.

28 ... ♘f8

This move is not bad, but Black had other moves:

1) Now that the a-pawn is safe he could have moved his queen closer to the main scene of action with 28...♕b8 29 ♕e2 (29 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 30 g5 ♕f8 gets White nowhere) 29...♕e8 and White's advantage is minimal.

2) More interesting is the double-edged 28...e5 29 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 30 ♘h4!? e4 31 ♘f5+ (31 ♘b2 ♘f8 32 f3 ♕b4! 33 ♘f5+ ♔h8 is also unclear) 31...♔f7 (31...♔h8!?), and now:

2a) Despite the strong knight on f5 and the danger presented by a possible entry of White's queen, Black holds his own in the complications after 32 ♕d2?! (32 ♕c1 is similar):

2a1) 32...exd3 33 ♕e3! (33 ♕h6? is weak due to 33...♕b1+ 34 ♔g2 ♕e1) 33...♘e5 34 ♕h6! (after 34 dxe5 ♗xe5 35 ♕xd3 ♕b4 it is already White who is fighting for a draw) 34...♘xg4 35 ♕g7+ ♔e6 36 ♕xg4 h5 37 ♕xh5 (37 ♘g7+ ♔f7 38 ♘xh5 ♕b1+ 39 ♔g2 d2 40 ♕g7+ ♔e6 gets White nowhere) 37...♕b8 38 ♕h3! and as White threatens ♘d6+ with a mating attack, he will win the d3-pawn and can continue harassing Black's vulnerable king.

2a2) However, Black has the less greedy 32...♕b3!. Since 33 ♕h6? is met by 33...♕d1+, White is then fighting to save the game.

2b) 32 ♘e1 is more sedate; after 32...♕b4 33 ♕c1 ♔e8! Black escapes from the danger zone just in time.

2c) Paradoxically, 32 ♘b2!? is somewhat better. Now Black must be careful, as 32...♕b4 is risky in view of 33 ♕c1 and 32...♘f8 33 ♕c1 ♔e8 34 ♕h6! ♕xb2 35 ♕xf6 ♗xh2+ 36 ♔g2 ♘g6 37 ♕xc6+ ♔d8 38 ♕xd5+ ♔c7 39 ♕f7+ ♔c6 40 ♕e6+ ♔c7 41 ♕b6+ also illustrates the possible dangers. More circumspect is 32...♕b8, when Black is very close to full equality.

29 ♗xg7

With the approaching time-control the play becomes more concrete. White would have liked to postpone this exchange, but Black was intending to play ...e5 after the consolidating ...♘g6. An attempt to prevent this with 29 h4 runs into 29...♕c8 or even 29...e5!? 30 dxe5 ♕c8.

29 ... ♔xg7
30 g5 ♘g6

Black could also have played 30...fxg5 31 ♘xg5 h6 32 ♘f3 ♘g6 33 ♕e2 (33 h4 ♗b8 34 h5 ♕f7! favours Black) 33...♕b1+ 34 ♘fe1 ♘f4 35 ♘xf4 ♗xf4 36 ♕xe6 ♗d2 37 ♔f1 ♕c1, when due to the strong pin White can't improve his position. However, Wahls was also running short of time.

31 gxf6+ ♔xf6
32 h4 h5

This is playable, but certainly not forced. After 32...♘f4!? White does best to force a draw by 33 ♘g5 (33 ♘de5?! ♗xe5 34 dxe5+ ♔g7 35 ♘g5 ♔g8 is dangerous only for White) 33...h6 34 ♘xf4 ♗xf4 35 ♘xe6! ♗b8! 36 h5 ♔xe6 (36...♕f7 is no better due to 37 ♘d8) 37 ♕g6+ ♔d7 38 ♕g7+ with a perpetual.

33 ♕c1

33 ♕d2? ♕b1+ 34 ♘fe1 (34 ♔g2? ♕xd3!) 34...♘xh4 (34...♕a1!? 35 ♕g5+ ♔f7 is equivalent) 35 ♕h6+ ♘g6 hands the advantage over to Black, so for the time being the black queen must be kept at bay.

33 ... ♕b3?

Understandable activity, but this mistake loses the game. The prophylactic 33...♔g7! was necessary, when the direct tries for White lead nowhere:

1) 34 ♕g5 ♕b1+ 35 ♘de1 (35 ♘fe1? is weaker in view of 35...♕d1) 35...♕f5 36 ♕xf5 exf5 with an equal endgame.

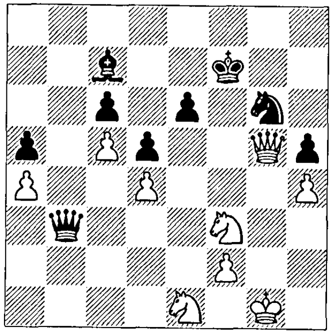
2) 34 ♘g5 ♔f6 35 ♕e1 (35 ♘f3 or 35 ♘h7+ leads to repetition) 35...♕c8 with a balanced position (after 35...♘xh4? 36 f4! ♗xf4 37 ♘xf4 ♔xg5 38 ♕g3+ Black loses a piece).

3) Even the more refined 34 ♕d1!? is well met by 34...♗b8!. The queen aims for e7 or f7 and 35 ♘g5 (after 35 ♔h1 ♕e7 36 ♘g5 ♔h6 37 ♕d2 ♘xh4 the discovered check promises White nothing) 35...♘xh4 36 ♘xe6+ ♔g8 obliges White to guard his weak back rank.

34 ♕g5+ ♔f7

34...♔g7 35 ♘fe5 ♗xe5 36 ♘xe5 ♕b1+ 37 ♔h2 is even worse for Black.

35 ♘de1! *(D)*



Now the h5-pawn falls, as Black's queen can't get to f5 in time.

35 ... ♘f4

Or 35...♕xa4 36 ♕xh5, when with his queen misplaced Black is helpless; for example, 36...♔f6 37 ♕h7 ♗f4 38 ♕g8! ♗h6 39 ♘e5! ♘xe5 40 dxe5+ ♔xe5 41 ♕h8+ and White wins the bishop.

36 ♘e5+ ♗xe5
37 ♕xe5 ♘g6

This sad but necessary retreat spells the end for Black.

38 ♕xh5 ♕b1

After 38...♕xa4 simplest is the prosaic 39 ♕h7+ (39 ♘f3!?) 39...♔f6 40 h5, when White's passed pawn is too strong.

39 ♔f1 ♔g7
40 ♕g4 ♔f7

40...♕f5 41 ♕xf5 exf5 42 ♘f3 is hopeless for Black, as he will lose either the c6- or the a5-pawn.

41 ♕f3+ ♔g7

41...♔e7 loses to 42 h5 ♘f8 43 ♕g3!.

42 h5 ♘e7

This loses another pawn immediately, but even after the more resilient 42...♘f8 43 h6+ ♔g8 44 ♕g3+ ♕g6 45 ♘f3 ♔h7 46 ♕xg6+ ♘xg6 47 ♘g5+ ♔xh6 48 ♘xe6 ♘e7 49 ♔e2 followed by ♘d8-b7 the endgame is untenable for Black.

43 h6+! 1-0

Black had no wish to continue suffering after 43...♔g8 (otherwise Black loses a piece; e.g., 43...♔g6 44 ♕g4+ ♔xh6 45 ♕h4+) 44 ♕f6 ♘f5 (44...♕h7 45 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 46 ♘f3 is no improvement for Black) 45 ♕xe6+ ♔h7 46 ♕d7+, when the extra material decides.

Summary

With 6 b4!? White started an ambitious plan, aiming to gain space all over the board and squeeze Black's forces before starting a concentrated assault against the king. The ability to switch quickly between different objects of attack is the main plus offered by spatial superiority and to some extent this also decided the game after White toyed with queenside play first. Black's problems in the first phase of the game stemmed from his passive reactions at the crucial moments of the fight. The culprits were 7...♘bd7, 15...♖b8 and especially 19...♖a7?!, while the later omission of the sharp 28...e5 also ranks in this category. 11...bxc5?! was an inaccuracy of a different sort, as this misguided release of the tension reduced Black's options and for a long time (until 25...♖b7) he had to reckon with a possible invasion via the inadvertently opened b-file. Also the a5-pawn was more vulnerable than its white counterpart. Krasenkow's sins were exactly the opposite of Wahls's with the exception of spurning the consistent 9 e4! – he was too impetuous in situations when piling up the pressure would have brought better results. 19 e4 and more seriously 23 exf6?! both forced matters and allowed Black to get back into the game.

Paradoxically enough, the most serious and decisive error came when Wahls thought the time had come to lash out. With 33...♕b3? he underestimated White's attacking potential in a considerably simplified and equal position. The correct 33...♔g7! would have held the game, as it safeguards the vulnerable king, while the queen's scope from b7 remains undiminished.

Game 33

Vladimir Kramnik – Alexei Shirov

WCC Match (game 9), Cazorla 1998

Grünfeld Defence [D70]

1 d4 ♘f6
2 c4 g6
3 f3!?

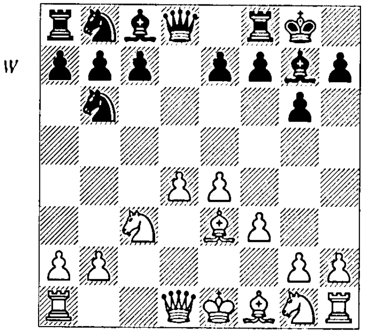
Kramnik was trailing Shirov by one point and this, the penultimate game, was his last realistic chance to level the match score. As his favourite Exchange Variation against the Grünfeld had failed to yield him any tangible advantage in the previous encounters, he used the free day to prepare a less played, but nevertheless sharp and venomous sideline.

3 ... d5

Although Kramnik hasn't played the Sämisch Variation against the King's Indian since 1993, Shirov decides to stick to his pre-match preparation and trust the Grünfeld.

4 cxd5 ♘xd5
5 e4 ♘b6
6 ♘c3 ♗g7
7 ♗e3 0-0 *(D)*

This line recently had one of its rare outings at top level in Khalifman-Leko, Budapest (5) 2000: 7...e5!? 8 d5 c6 9 ♕d2 cxd5 10 ♗b5+ (10 exd5 ♘c4! 11 ♗xc4 ♕h4+ is one of the points of Leko's move-order) 10...♗d7 11 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 12 ♗xd7+ ♘xd7 13 ♘xd5 ♕d6 14 ♘e2 h5 15 ♕b4 ♕xb4+ 16 ♘xb4 ♗h6 17 ♘d5 0-0 18 ♘ec3 ♘c5 19 ♖d1 ♔g7 20 h4 ♘e6 21 ♔f2 ♖fd8 22 g4 f6 23 gxh5 gxh5 24 ♘c7 ♔f7 25 ♘f5 ♗f8 26 ♘d5 ♖ac8 27 ♖c1 ♗c5+ 28 ♔e2 ♘d4+ 29 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 and Black's bishop was no weaker than White's knight.

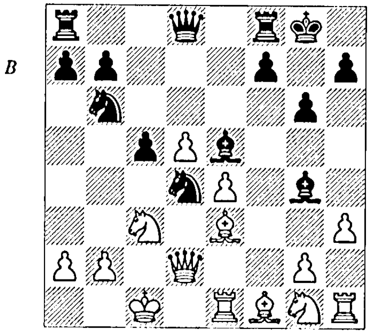


8 ♕d2

The short-lived burst of popularity that 3 f3 enjoyed in the mid-1980s was connected with 8 f4. However, Black gradually learned how to cope with the fashionable continuation; after 8...♘c6 9 d5 a reliable method is 9...♘a5 10 ♗d4 e5 11 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 12 fxe5 ♕h4+ 13 g3 ♕e7 14 ♕d4 ♖d8 15 b4 ♘ac4! 16 ♘f3 ♗g4 17 ♗xc4 ♗xf3 18 0-0 ♕xb4 19 e6 fxe6 20 ♖xf3 ♕xc4 21 ♕f6 exd5 22 ♕e6+ with a perpetual that has occurred in several games. Even the sharper 9...♘b8!? is playable: 10 a4 e5 11 a5 exf4 12 ♗xf4 (12 axb6? fxe3 13 ♖xa7 ♗xc3+ 14 bxc3 ♕h4+ 15 g3 ♕xe4 gives Black an advantage) 12...♘6d7 13 ♘f3 ♖e8 with good counterplay. All this is not too enticing for White and no wonder Kramnik chooses the other main move.

8 ... e5!?

Confronted with an opening surprise, Shirov decides to avoid the more usual alternative 8...♘c6 9 0-0-0 e5 10 d5 ♘d4 11 f4 (11 ♘b5 ♘xb5 12 ♗xb5 ♗d7 13 ♗e2 c6 14 dxc6 ♗xc6 leads only to a sterile endgame) 11...c5 12 fxe5 ♗g4 (this hinders White's normal development; 12...♗xe5 is weaker in view of 13 ♘f3) 13 ♖e1 ♗xe5 14 h3 *(D)* and now Black is faced with an important decision:



1) More often than not he plays the natural 14...♗d7 15 ♘f3 ♘xf3 16 gxf3 ♕e7. An older edition of the *ECO* claims Black is slightly better here, but objectively the position is at best unclear, with current practice speaking heavily in White's favour. A possible continuation is 17 h4 (17 ♗h6 ♖fe8 18 f4 ♗d4 19 ♗d3, intending h4-h5, is also interesting) 17...h5 18 ♔b1!?, as in Sjödahl-Smejkal, Bundesliga 1999/00. White first stops the counterplay connected with ...♘a4 and ...c4 and then concentrates on his kingside ambitions.

2) 14...♕h4 is a sharper move. Although Black exposes his queen, he continues to hamper White's normal development. After 15 ♗d3 ♖fe8 (15...f5? 16 ♗f2 ♕h5 17 exf5 leaves Black with little to show for the pawn) 16 ♖f1 he can try even the wild 16...f5!?. Now 17 ♗g5 ♕h5 18 hxg4!? (18 ♘ge2 ♗xe2 19 ♘xe2 c4 20 ♘xd4 cxd3 is OK for Black) 18...♕xh1 19 ♘h3 ♕h2 20 exf5 is admittedly quite risky for Black, but by no means completely clear.

Only Kramnik can say for sure what he had in mind, but from a practical viewpoint Shirov's decision to avoid this complicated labyrinth can hardly be criticized.

9 d5 c6

9...f5 10 0-0-0 c6 had also been tested in earlier games, but it's more natural to undermine White's d-pawn immediately.

10 h4

10 d6?! ♗e6 11 b3 ♘8d7 is dubious for White, as without the exchange of the central pawns, White's advanced d-pawn is far more vulnerable. As indicated above, 10 ♖d1 cxd5 11 exd5 ♘c4 is satisfactory for Black. The text-move aims to prevent this tactical possibility and not only reveals White's kingside intentions, but also furthers his development by enabling him to play ♘h3 later on. Kramnik's move is a flexible alternative to the more committal 10 0-0-0, since castling gives Black a clear object of counterplay on the c-file. After 10...cxd5 11 exd5 ♘a6 (11...f5!? 12 h4 is also difficult to assess clearly), followed by ...♗d7 and ...♖c8, there arises a sharp position with chances for both sides.

10 ... h5!

Black's reaction is equally flexible and logical, though at the time our game was played it was a novelty. 10...♗f6 achieves little after 11 g3, while White can even consider the more ambitious idea 11 h5!? ♗h4+ 12 ♔d1. After 10...cxd5 11 exd5 ♘8d7?! (11...f5 12 h5 also gives White some advantage) 12 h5 ♘f6 13 hxg6 fxg6 14 0-0-0 ♗d7 15 g4 ♖c8 16 ♔b1 ♘c4 17 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 18 ♘ge2 e4?! 19 g5 exf3 20 gxf6 ♕xf6 21 ♘d4 h5 22 ♖hf1 ♗g4 23 ♕d3 ♖cc8 24 ♔a1 Black didn't have sufficient compensation in Karasev-Zdroevsky, Leningrad 1990.

11 ♗e2

White starts toying with g4, thus disrupting Black's normal development. With some foresight one might ask why doesn't White play 11 ♖d1 immediately, so that later on he can take on c4 directly from f1. The problem is that 11...cxd5 12 exd5 ♗f5!? 13 ♗e2 ♕c8 gives Black a satisfactory position.

11 ... cxd5

We have already mentioned that such an important exchange must be carefully timed, as now White's access to the e4-square enhances the strength of his central pawn. However, in fact Black has no really useful alternatives. After 11...♘8d7 White can redirect his efforts with 12 dxc6 and Black's queenside becomes vulnerable, while 11...♖e8 12 ♖d1 (12 g4?! is premature in view of 12...cxd5 13 exd5 e4!) leaves Black facing the same problems.

12 exd5 ♘8d7

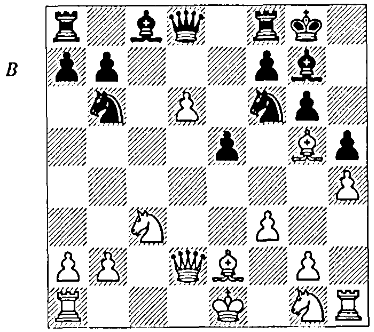
This move was criticized afterwards, but it seems logical enough and the suggested improvements, such as 12...f5!? 13 ♗g5 ♗f6 14 ♘h3 and 12...♘a6 13 g4, leave Black struggling for effective counterplay.

13 d6!

The immediate 13 g4? is out of the question due to 13...hxg4 14 fxg4 ♘f6, but as the knight can't go to c6 any more, White bravely lunges forward.

13 ... ♘f6

14 ♗g5 (D)



The d6-pawn seriously cramps Black and this pin limits his possibilities; moreover, g4 is in the air again. Shirov was down on the clock and it was pretty clear to him that he had to act forcefully to get into the game.

14 ... ♖e8?

This logical move is a serious mistake, since here the rook is exposed both to ♘b5-c7, as well as a later d7 with tempo. Black's main alternatives are two developing moves:

1) 14...♗d7 is somewhat passive. After 15 g4, 15...hxg4?! 16 fxg4 is just as risky for Black as in line '2b', while after 15...♕c8 Black's pieces are less active compared with the analogous line '2b2'.

2) 14...♗e6 is better:

2a) 15 ♘h3 ♖c8 (the immediate 15...♘c4!? 16 ♗xc4 ♗xc4, as recommended by Kramnik,

seems more accurate) 16 ♘f2 ♘c4 17 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 18 ♘fe4 ♘xe4 19 ♘xe4 f6 20 ♗e3 b6 21 0-0 ♕d7 22 ♖ac1 ♖fc8 23 ♖xc4 ♖xc4 24 b3 ♖c6 with only a slight edge for White at best, Ward-Knott, British Ch (Torquay) 1998.

2b) More ambitious is 15 g4!? ♕d7 (after 15...hxg4 16 fxg4, the threat of h5-h6 causes Black serious difficulties; e.g., 16...♕d7 17 h5 ♗xg4 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♘e4 ♗d8 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 ♕h6 ♗xe2 22 ♕h8+! ♔f7 23 ♕h7+ ♔e8 24 ♕xg6+ ♕f7 25 d7+! ♔xd7 26 ♖h7 wins the queen and the game) and now:

2b1) 16 ♗b5 ♕c8 17 gxh5 ♘xh5 18 ♗e7 wins the exchange, but White's scrappy pawn-structure and poorly coordinated pieces give Black more than sufficient play after 18...a6! (the immediate counterattack 18...♘c4? 19 d7! ♕c7 20 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 21 ♘e4! ♖fd8 22 ♖c1 costs Black too much material; after 22...♖xd7 23 ♖xc4 ♕xc4 24 ♕xd7 he doesn't have enough for the piece) 19 ♗xf8 ♕xf8.

2b2) One can agree with Sakaev that 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 is unclear after 17 ♘e4 ♕d8 or 17 gxh5 ♗f5!?. White's dark-squared bishop is an important piece and its absence compensates for the missing pawn.

15 ♖d1?!

Black's previous move was aimed especially against 15 g4?!, which can now be countered by 15...e4! 16 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 17 fxe4 f6, blasting open the centre while White's forces still remain undeveloped. Kramnik therefore abandons any kingside ambitions and turns his attention to the centre. The seemingly equivalent 15 0-0-0?! ♗d7 16 g4 ♖c8! places White's king in a dangerous spot, a good illustration being the sample line 17 gxh5 ♘a4 18 h6 ♕b6! 19 hxg7 ♘d5, when Black's attack comes first. White also refrains from the immediate 15 ♘h3 ♗xh3 16 ♖xh3 ♖c8, as Black has nothing better than a bishop move anyway and later the exchange on h3 will cost him a tempo.

The critical line was the direct and greedy 15 ♘b5!. Now the attempt to target d6 with 15...♖e6 16 ♖d1 ♗f8 fails to 17 ♕a5! ♗d7 (White threatened ♘c7 and also ♗c4 in some lines; 17...♗xd6? loses a piece to 18 ♕d2) 18 ♘c7 ♘a4 19 b4!, when Black's position disintegrates. Both 15...e4 16 ♘c7 exf3 17 ♘xf3 and 15...♘bd5 16 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 17 ♘c7 cost Black an exchange for rather nebulous compensation, while freely admitting something has gone wrong with 15...♖f8 16 ♖d1 also doesn't solve the problem. White has an undeniable initiative.

15 ... ♗e6

We already know that 15...♖e6?! can be well met by 16 ♘b5, so here let's just point out White has an even more 'harmonious' way to protect his d-pawn by 16 ♘h3!? ♗f8 17 ♘f2, as after 17...♖xd6? 18 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 19 ♘fe4 Black loses a rook. Also after the more circumspect 15...♗d7!? 16 ♘h3 (16 ♘b5? is weak due to 16...♗xb5 17 ♗xb5 ♖e6, since after ...a6 and ...♕d7 the d6-pawn will quickly become vulnerable) 16...♖c8 17 b3 White retains an edge.

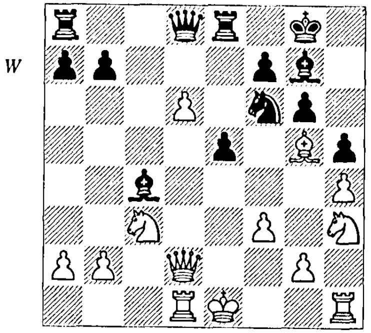
16 ♘h3

16 ♘b5?! is inconclusive due to 16...♘bd5 17 ♗c4 a6!, so Kramnik logically finishes his development.

16 ... ♘c4

We have already mentioned that 16...♗xh3 17 ♖xh3 is inferior for Black; not only is ♘b5 a threat, but g4 is once again on White's agenda. Shirov tries to create counterplay by trapping White's king in the middle, but doesn't pay sufficient attention to the d-pawn. Strangely enough, in the game Kramnik-Shirov, Tilburg 1997 a central passed pawn, this time on e6, decided the fight for Kramnik (see annotations to Game 30). In this sense 16...♖c8!? again deserves attention, emulating the Ward-Knott game mentioned above.

17 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 (D)



18 b3

The straightforward 18 d7?! ♖e7 19 ♗xf6 (19 b3? is bad due to 19...♗e6) 19...♗xf6 gets White nowhere:

1) 20 ♘e4 ♗g7 (20...♗xh4+?! is weaker as after 21 g3 ♗e6 22 ♕h6! ♗xg3+ 23 ♘xg3 ♖xd7 24 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 25 ♘g5 ♕a5+ 26 ♔f1 ♗b5+ 27 ♘e2 White's attack decides) doesn't achieve anything, as 21 ♕b4 (21 ♘c5?! e4! 22 fxe4 b6 is advantageous for Black) 21...♗e6 22 ♘c5 ♗xd7 23 ♕xb7 (23 ♕d2 ♕c7 24 ♘xd7 ♔h8! and ...♖d8 regains the piece) 23...♕c8! is OK for Black.

2) After 20 ♘g5 Black must act energetically. If White manages to play b3 and ♘ge4 unmolested, he can whip up a dangerous attack with g4, in which the d-pawn will play a major role:

2a) 20...♗xg5? 21 hxg5 ♗e6 22 ♘e4 enables White to keep his d7-pawn alive.

2b) 20...♗e6 isn't ideal either owing to 21 ♘d5! (21 ♘xe6 is weaker in view of 21...♖xe6; Black can play around the pawn with, for example, ...♕a5, ...♖d8 and ...♗e7-c5-d4) 21...♗xg5 (after 21...♖xd7 22 ♘xe6 ♗xh4+ 23 ♔e2 fxe6 24 ♘e7+! White wins the exchange) 22 hxg5 ♖xd7 (the situation after 22...♗xd5 23 ♕xd5 is hopeless for Black) 23 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 24 gxf6 ♖xd2 25 ♖xd2 ♗xa2 26 ♔f2 and Black is fighting for his life.

2c) The right move is 20...e4!, when after 21 fxe4 (21 ♘gxe4 ♗e5 22 ♕g5 ♔h7 with ideas like ...f5 or ...f6 makes White's king feel very uneasy) the simplest is 21...♗xc3 (21...b5!?) 22 bxc3 (22 ♕xc3 ♖xd7! 23 ♖xd7 ♕xd7, with the point 24 ♕xc4 ♖c8, is similar) 22...♗b5 and Black regains the pawn with an advantage. Therefore White first asks the c4-bishop an unpleasant question.

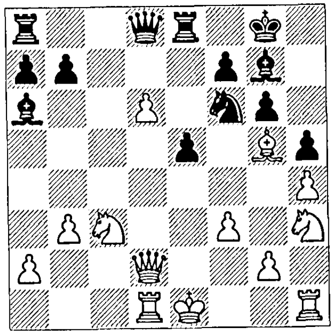
18 ... ♗a6? *(D)*

Again in the same spirit as 16...♘c4. The drawbacks of this continuation are obvious – now the passed pawn finally gets a green light. Thus 18...♗e6 has to be regarded as the only move, although now after 19 ♘f2 ♕d7 20 0-0 Black gets a somewhat inferior version of the similar positions mentioned above. However, the most important fact is that White's main trump remains blockaded for the time being. The positive effect of Shirov's ambitious move is that it increases the tension and accelerates the approaching crisis.

19 ♘d5?

After this serious tactical mistake Black's gamble pays off and by a resourceful counter he turns the game in his favour. Let's look at the stronger alternatives:

W



1) 19 ♘f2 ♕d7 20 ♘fe4 gives White an advantage as his king finds a safe haven on f2.

2) 19 d7! is even more convincing:

2a) The wild 19...e4? 20 dxe8♕+ ♕xe8 21 ♔f2 clearly gets Black nowhere.

2b) Another speculative try is 19...♕xd7 20 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 21 ♖xd7 e4 22 ♘d5!? (22 ♘xe4 f5 23 ♘hf2 fxe4 24 ♘xe4 ♗b5 25 ♖xb7 ♗c6 26 ♖c7 ♗xe4 27 fxe4 ♖xe4+ 28 ♔d1 gives White a clear extra pawn and very good winning chances, but why not retain the extra piece?) 22...exf3+ 23 ♘e7+ ♔h7 (23...♔f8 24 ♔f2 is no improvement for Black) 24 gxf3 f6 25 ♗e3 and Black can't exploit the pin on the e-file; e.g., 25...♖ad8 26 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 27 ♘f4 ♖e8 28 ♘ed5 (28 ♘fxg6? ♗d3) is winning for White.

2c) That leaves Black with rook retreats: 19...♖f8 (19...♖e7 is even weaker due to 20 ♘d5) 20 ♘d5 b6 (20...♗b5 21 ♕b4! doesn't help Black; the d7-pawn remain taboo) 21 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 22 ♕d6 ♔g7 23 ♔f2 is hopeless for Black, as ♖he1 is coming and the d7-pawn fully paralyses Black.

2d) Relatively better is 19...♖e6 20 ♘d5 (20 ♘f2!? is a safe and playable alternative), but even here Black is in dire straits. White threatens ♗xf6 and ♘g5 or ♘c7, while the counterattack 20...e4?! 21 ♘hf4 e3 22 ♘xe3 ♖e7 (after 22...♕xd7 23 ♕xd7 ♖xe3+ 24 ♔f2 White wins an exchange) 23 ♘fd5 ♘xd5 24 ♕xd5 ♗f6 25 ♔f2 fails to impress.

19 ... e4!
20 ♘xf6+

The logical follow-up to the previous move. However, other solutions are also insufficient:

1) A half-measure such as 20 f4? e3! 21 ♕c2 (21 ♘xe3 loses immediately to 21...♕b6) 21...♘xd5 22 ♗xd8 ♗c3+ 23 ♕xc3 ♘xc3 24 ♗g5 ♘xd1 25 ♔xd1 ♖e6 26 ♗e7 ♗f1! doesn't help.

2) 20 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 (20...♔h7!?) 21 dxe7 ♕xe7 22 ♕d6 ♕e8! gives Black a powerful attack for a minimal investment. A successful king-hunt after 23 ♗xf6 exf3+ 24 ♔f2 (24 ♗e7 fxg2 25 ♖g1 ♕b5 wins for Black) 24...♕e2+ 25 ♔g3 ♕xg2+ 26 ♔f4 ♕g4+ 27 ♔e3 ♖e8+ 28 ♔d2 ♖e2+ 29 ♔c3 ♕c8+ 30 ♔d4 ♗f8 clinches the point.

3) The attempt to transpose to note '2d' to White's 19th move by 20 d7 (20...♖e6?! completes the transposition) runs into 20...exf3+! 21 dxe8♕+ ♕xe8+ 22 ♕e3 (22 ♘e3? is weak due to 22...♘e4) 22...♘xd5 23 ♖xd5 ♕c6 and despite being a rook down, Black's attack will net him material:

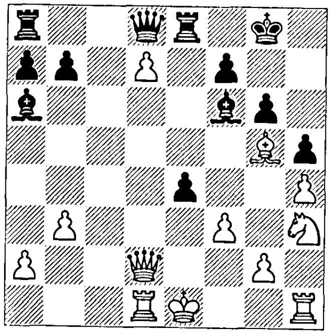
3a) 24 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 25 ♗xd8 ♕c2 26 ♕e8+ ♗f8 is decisive, as 27 gxf3 ♕c1+ 28 ♔f2 ♕xh1 29 ♘g5? costs White his queen after 29...♕f1+ 30 ♔g3 ♕g1+ 31 ♔f4 ♕h2+.

3b) Another convincing line is 24 ♖c5 ♕d7 25 ♕xf3 ♖e8+ 26 ♗e3 ♕d3 27 ♔f2 ♗d4.

3c) 24 ♕xf3 ♖e8+ 25 ♔f2 ♗e2 26 ♖c1 ♗xf3 (not 26...♕b6+?, when 27 ♕e3! ♖xe3 28 ♗xe3 turns the tables) 27 ♖xc6 ♗xd5 leads to a technically won endgame for Black.

20 ... ♗xf6
21 d7 *(D)*

W



21 ... ♕b6!!

Black didn't have this powerful blow in any of the lines above. Now White's king gets into deadly cross-fire. Other moves are weaker:

1) The passive continuation 21...♖f8? is naturally out of the question due to 22 fxe4 or even 22 ♘f2!?.

2) 21...♖e6 is somewhat more intricate, but also insufficient:

2a) 22 ♘f4? is weak in view of 22...e3! 23 ♕b4 ♕b6! 24 d8♕+ (not 24 ♕xb6? ♗c3+) 24...♖xd8 25 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 26 ♕xb6 ♖xb6!? (even 26...♗xb6 27 ♘xe6 ♗a5+ 28 ♔d1 e2+ 29 ♔c2 e1♕ 30 ♖xe1 ♗xe1 31 ♘c5 ♗f1 gives Black good winning chances thanks to his active bishops) 27 ♗xd8 ♖c6, when Black regains the sacrificed piece with interest.

2b) The correct way is 22 ♗xf6 exf3+ 23 ♔f2 ♖xf6 (unfortunately this is forced; although 23...♖e2+? 24 ♕xe2 fxe2 leads to a draw if White carelessly plays 25 ♗xd8? exd1♕ 26 ♖xd1 ♖xd8 27 a4 ♔f8 28 ♘g5 ♔e7 29 ♖e1+ ♔f8, White has the decisive *zwischenzug* 25 ♖d6!) 24 gxf3 and with his king in relative safety again, White's d-pawn is ready to decide the game.

But the fact that 19 ♘d5? let Black off the hook is borne out by yet another playable alternative, after which White just barely survives:

3) 21...e3!? 22 dxe8♕+ (22 ♕b4? ♕c7! and the double threats ...♗c3+ and ...♕g3+ seal White's fate) 22...♕xe8 23 ♕a5! (best; 23 ♕b4? loses at once to 23...♕e5!, while after 23 ♕xe3 ♗xg5 24 ♕xe8+ ♖xe8+ 25 ♔f2 ♗xh4+ White's h1-rook remains passive and Black has more than sufficient compensation for the exchange) 23...♕c6 (23...♗g7 24 ♕c5 gets Black nowhere) 24 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 25 ♘g5 ♕b2 26 ♖d8+ ♔g7 (26...♖xd8 27 ♕xd8+ ♔g7 28 ♘e6+ is similar) 27 ♘e6+! and as the knight is taboo, Black has to acquiesce to a perpetual after 27...♔h7 28 ♘f8+.

22 dxe8♕+

There is nothing else; 22 ♗xf6? exf3+ 23 dxe8♕+ ♖xe8+ leads directly to mate.

22 ... ♖xe8
23 ♕e3

Again the only move. Now Black wins most of the sacrificed material back, but after 23 f4 e3 a check from a5 or b4 decides immediately. 23 ♗e3 ♗xh4+ 24 ♘f2 exf3 doesn't help White either and 23 ♕d7 ♗c3+ (23...♗b5!? is also possible) 24 ♖d2 ♗b5 25 ♕d5 e3 is hardly any better, as after 26 ♗xe3 ♕xe3+ 27 ♔d1

♗e2+ 28 ♔c2 ♗xd2 Black wins a piece with a continuing attack.

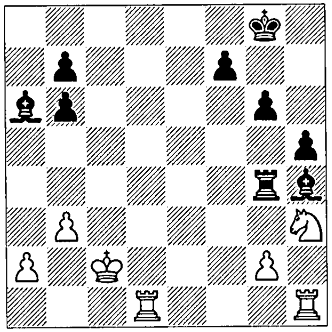
23 ... ♗xg5
24 ♕xb6

After 24 ♕xg5? exf3+ 25 ♔d2 ♕d4+ 26 ♔c1 ♕a1+ 27 ♔c2 ♖c8+ Black mates.

24 ... ♗xh4+
25 ♔d2

Both 25 ♘f2 exf3+ 26 ♔d2 ♖e2+ 27 ♔c3 axb6 28 ♖xh4 ♖xf2 and 25 ♕f2 exf3+ 26 ♔d2 ♗xf2 27 gxf3 ♗e3+ 28 ♔c2 ♗e2 are even worse for White. Three pawns are too much for the exchange and Black has a technically won position.

25 ... axb6
26 fxe4 ♖xe4
27 ♔c2 ♖g4 *(D)*



The dust has settled and Black has a large advantage. With his bishop-pair and two pawns for the exchange he is close to winning, especially as White's forces are still uncoordinated and his g2-pawn is a serious weakness.

28 ♖d2

28 ♖hg1 ♗b5 followed by ...♗c6 doesn't change the evaluation.

28 ... ♗e7!

Shirov remains vigilant; instead, 28...♗b5?! 29 ♘f2 ♖f4 30 ♘d3 enables White to get his knight into play and force either repetition or exchanges that are advantageous for the defence.

29 ♖g1 ♔g7

29...♗b5!? is an equivalent alternative.

30 ♘f2

Even 30 a4 doesn't keep the a6-bishop out of play for long in view of 30...b5.

30 ... ♖f4

The less accurate continuation 30...♖g3 31 ♘e4 ♖e3 32 ♘d6 allows White to activate his knight.

31 ♘d3 ♖e4
32 ♖gd1?!

32 ♘f2 ♖e6 (or even 32...♖e3) doesn't alter matters significantly. However, more chances for stiffer resistance were offered by 32 a4!? b5 (32...♗g5 33 ♖f2 ♗e3 34 ♖e2 f5 is good for Black, but still not decisive) 33 ♖e1 (33 a5 is weaker due to 33...b4) 33...♖xe1 34 ♘xe1 bxa4 35 bxa4 ♗b4 36 ♖d1.

32 ... ♗b5
33 a4 ♗c6
34 ♖e1?!

After this final mistake, White loses another pawn and lands in a dead lost endgame. However, other moves wouldn't really help in the long run; e.g., 34 ♘f2 ♖e3 and ...♖g3 or 34 ♖f1 ♗g5 35 ♖df2 f5. White has permanent problems with g2 and Black's kingside pawns will gradually decide the game.

34 ... ♖xe1
35 ♘xe1 ♗b4
36 ♖e2 ♗xe1
37 ♖xe1 ♗xg2

Three connected passed pawns are simply too much to cope with.

38 ♔d2

After 38 ♖g1 ♗e4+ 39 ♔d2 f5 40 ♔e3 h4 41 ♔f4 ♔f6 42 b4 ♗d5 Black will advance his g-pawn when White runs out of moves.

38 ... h4
39 ♔e3 ♗d5
40 b4

40 ♔f4 gives Black a pleasant choice. The line 40...♗xb3 41 ♖b1 ♗xa4 42 ♖xb6 (42 ♔g4 ♗d7+ 43 ♔xh4 b5 is just as hopeless for White) 42...♗c6 43 ♔g4 f5+ 44 ♔xh4 ♔f6 wins relatively easily, but even simpler is 40...♔f6! 41 ♔g4 g5, when the kingside pawn phalanx is unstoppable.

40 ... h3
41 ♖e2 f5

41...g5 is similar.

42 ♖d2 ♗e4

42...♗g2 43 ♔f2 g5 44 ♖d7+ ♔f6 45 ♖d6+ ♔e5 46 ♖xb6 f4 was also sufficient.

43 ♔f4 ♗g2
44 ♖d7+

44 ♔g3 g5 doesn't help White, but even the rook can't stop the h-pawn for long.

44 ... ♔f6
45 ♖h7 g5+
46 ♔g3 f4+
47 ♔g4 ♔e5
48 b5 0-1

White has finally had enough. He can't prevent Black's king from supporting the advance of his pawns.

Summary

Given the immense importance of the game, it's quite understandable that both players tried to surprise their opponent right from the very start of the encounter (White with 3 f3!?; later Black with 8...e5!?). The attempts to gain a psychological advantage by manoeuvring the adversary into an unknown situation quickly led the game away from established theory and by move 10 the players were already treading on relatively virgin territory. Kramnik cleverly masked his intentions by 10 h4; postponing castling made it more difficult for Black to focus his counterplay. The phase from move 11-18 was characterized by growing tension, when even apparently insignificant nuances could directly influence the outcome of the opening duel. The annotations reveal White's main ideas: up to move 15 he combined support of his passed pawn with possible kingside play (g4). Shirov vehemently fought the latter threat, targeting White's centralized king by 14...♖e8?, but straightforward development (14...♗e6) was a better way to meet both of the aforementioned intentions. Also later Black persisted in his counterattacking tendencies (15...♗e6, 16...♘c4 and 18...♗a6?) and continued to underestimate the strength of the advanced d-pawn.

The critical moment came after 18...♗a6?. Firstly Shirov didn't realize how strong 19 d7! would have been, then apparently Kramnik overestimated Black's chances in line '2b'. In any case caution was necessary, as the king on e1 was still a welcome target for the e8-rook and a6-bishop and the slip 19 ♘d5? enabled Black to unleash their potential by 19...e4!. The attack culminated with 21...♕b6!!, and the position after 27...♖g4 arose practically by force. The sudden change forced White to abandon any ambitions and defend a heavily compromised position. Further mistakes (32 ♖gd1?!, 34 ♖e1?!), understandable in the circumstances, eased Black's task.

Game 34

Predrag Nikolić – Loek van Wely

Dutch Championship, Rotterdam 1998

English Opening [A30]

1 ♘f3 ♘f6
2 c4 c5
3 g3 b6
4 ♗g2 ♗b7
5 0-0 e6
6 ♘c3 ♗e7

This is the older and original move-order. Only in the second half of the 1980s did Black, in an attempt to avoid some of the more unpleasant lines, start to play more often 6...a6 and especially 6...d6. This logically led White to look for effective countermeasures and the most important weapon against these subvariations became the aggressive 7 ♖e1!? a6 8 e4 ♗e7 9 d4 cxd4 10 ♘xd4 ♕c7 11 ♗e3 ♘bd7 12 ♖c1 (or even 12 f4!?). In this line White's chances for a successful kingside pawn-storm are far more realistic than in any other of the numerous Hedgehog positions, and he also has various tactical possibilities connected with ♘d5 and e5. Although Black is certainly not devoid of counterchances, such a state of affairs is not to everyone's taste.

7 d4

Now after 7 ♖e1 White has to reckon with a radical change of the pawn-structure and the character of the position after 7...d5!? 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 (or 8...exd5 9 d4 0-0) 9 e4 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 0-0.

7 ... cxd4

8 ♕xd4

A well-known strategic axiom is that exchanges help the side that controls less space. Here it's certainly valid, since after 8 ♘xd4 ♗xg2 9 ♔xg2 ♕c8 10 ♕d3 ♘c6 11 b3 0-0 12 ♗b2 ♖d8 Black easily achieves an equal position.

8 ... 0-0

An important moment. The text-move has retained a modest number of followers, and Black can also reach the same positions by 8...♘c6 9 ♕f4 0-0 (9...♕b8?! is less accurate in view of 10 ♕xb8+ ♖xb8 11 ♗f4 ♖c8 12 ♘b5). However, the whole 'Hedgehog' concept gained popularity and fame thanks to the thematic move 8...d6. In the mid-1970s Ljubojević, Browne and especially Andersson became the first pioneers of this seemingly cramped, but also very solid and flexible set-up. In the early years their games very often followed a similar stereotyped pattern: White, goaded by Black's spatial concessions, exposed himself with an unprepared advance on one of the flanks, only to fall victim to a deadly counterattack. People started to see cramped positions in a new and viable light, and theoreticians gradually began to take the Hedgehog seriously and look for effective strategic plans to combat its spines on a6, b6, d6 and e6.

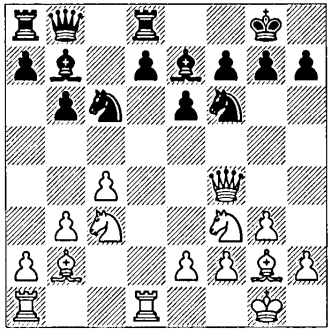
9 ♗f4!?

With this is an old and rather harmless continuation, Nikolić probably wanted to test his younger opponent's knowledge of chess history. More demanding is 9 ♖d1 ♘c6 (now both 9...d5?! 10 ♘e5 and 9...d6?! 10 b3 a6 11 ♗a3 ♘c6 12 ♕f4 d5 13 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 14 ♘e5 lead to serious difficulties for Black; he therefore does better to continue his development before changing the pawn-structure) 10 ♕f4 ♕b8 11 b3 ♖d8 12 ♗b2 *(D)*.

In this particular variation Black usually strives for a direct ...d5 advance, but he must realize it with care, because White's more active pieces allow him to retain a pull even in a symmetrical position:

1) The immediate 12...♕xf4 13 gxf4 ♘a5 14 ♘d4!? ♗xg2 15 ♔xg2 d5 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 17 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 18 e4 ♖dd8 19 ♖ac1 a6 20 f5! illustrates this tendency well; Black still had to work hard to achieve full equality in Benko-Saidy, USA Ch (New York) 1969.

B



2) A more patient and refined approach is 12...h6!?. Black stops a possible ♘g5-e4, avoids any back-rank problems and waits for White to commit himself. After 13 ♖d2 ♕xf4 14 gxf4 ♘a5 15 ♖ad1 d5 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 17 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♘e5 ♗xg2 19 ♔xg2 ♖xd2 20 ♖xd2 ♔f8 21 ♖c2 ♔e8 22 ♔f3 ♖d8 23 ♘d3 f6 24 b4 ♘b7 25 a4 ♖d5 26 ♖c7 ♖d7 careful defence gave him the desired draw in Kramnik-Leko, Linares 1999. As White didn't achieve anything on the d-file, a plausible improvement might be 13 ♖ac1 with similar intentions as in line '1'.

3) Black can also simply play 12...d6. Although in the Hedgehog it's preferable to develop the knight to d7, where it doesn't obstruct the b7-bishop, it's very difficult to profit from its position. Only two days after our game was played, 13 ♖d2 a6 14 ♖ad1 b5 15 ♘e4 ♘xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♘e5 17 ♕e3 ♘xf3+ 18 ♗xf3 bxc4 19 bxc4 ♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 ♕c7 led to a quick draw in Van der Sterren-Van Wely, Dutch Ch (Rotterdam) 1998. A more ambitious try is 13 e4 with a slight edge for White, but nothing tangible.

9 ... d6

This typical move creates a direct threat. Nevertheless, this stereotyped reaction is not ideal and although Black could have got a playable position even later on, 9...♘c6! is definitely more accurate. Then after 10 ♕d2 ♘a5 11 b3 d5 12 cxd5 (12 ♘e5?! ♖c8 13 ♖fd1 ♕e8! was uncomfortable for White in Alburt-Savon, Ashkhabad 1978, because 14 cxd5? runs into 14...♗b4) 12...♘xd5 13 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 he has solved all his opening problems. This is a case when a well-timed ...d5 gives Black full equality.

10 ♕d2 ♕c8

Here 10...d5? 11 ♘e5 is completely different due to the passive knight on b8.

An interesting question is whether Black can afford 10...♕c7. Then:

1) 11 ♘b5 ♕xc4 is the critical continuation:

1a) 12 ♗xd6? ♘e4 13 ♕d1 ♖d8 14 ♘d2 ♕xb5 15 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 16 ♗xe7 ♖d7 and Black is better.

1b) 12 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 13 ♗xd6 (after 13 ♕xd6 ♕xe2 14 ♖fe1 ♕a6! Black finds it easier to develop his b8-knight and White is hard pressed to prove his compensation; e.g., 15 ♗f1 ♕a5 16 ♖e5 ♘d5) 13...♘e4 (13...♖d8 14 ♖fd1 ♘e4 15 ♕f4 ♘c6 is less ambitious, but sufficient for equality) 14 ♕f4 ♘xd6 15 ♕xd6 ♕xe2 16 ♘d4 ♕a6 17 ♗xb7 (Black is better after 17 ♗h3 ♕d3! 18 ♖fe1 ♘a6) 17...♕xb7 18 ♖fd1 ♘a6 (18...♖c8 is weaker since after 19 ♖ac1 ♘a6 20 ♘c6 Black's rook must leave the c-file) 19 ♘c6 and White's activity gives him just about enough compensation, but certainly no more than that.

1c) 12 a4 and now:

1c1) 12...♘e4 13 ♕d3 ♕xd3 14 exd3 ♘c5 15 d4 (15 ♘c7?! ♘xd3 16 ♘xa8 ♘xf4 17 gxf4 ♗xa8 is very good for Black) 15...♘ca6 16 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 17 ♘xd6 ♗d5 is about equal.

1c2) Even safer is 12...♘a6! 13 ♖fc1 (White has to be careful after 13 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 14 ♕xd6 ♘d5) 13...♕d5 14 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 15 ♘xd6 ♕xd2 16 ♘xd2 ♗xg2 17 ♔xg2 ♖fd8 and there is little left to play for.

2) White can keep more tension with the solid 11 ♖ac1, but after 11...a6 12 ♖fd1 ♖d8 Black saves a tempo compared with the game.

11 ♖ac1 ♖d8

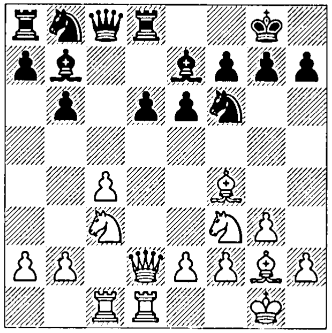
The anti-positional 11...e5? 12 ♗g5 should be avoided by Black at any cost, while after 11...♕xc4?! 12 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 (12...♖d8? doesn't work because of 13 ♘d5! ♕xd5 14 ♗xe7, when 14...♕xd2? 15 ♘xd2 ♗xg2 16 ♗xd8 ♗xf1 17 ♖c8! ♘e8 18 ♗xb6 leaves Black a pawn down and completely tied up; 14...♖e8 is forced, even though 15 ♗xf6 gives Black a miserable endgame) 13 ♕xd6 Black is worse off than in the game continuation. Black's exposed queen will be a source of trouble and he still has to finish his development.

12 ♖fd1 ***(D)***

12 ... a6?!

Although this move fits into Black's general set-up, in this concrete position it only creates another target on b6 for White's actively placed pieces.

B



1) 12...♕xc4 is not completely clear, but very risky. After 13 e4! the tactical threats to his queen force Black to tread with the utmost care:

1a) 13...♘xe4? loses on the spot to 14 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 15 ♘e1.

1b) 13...♕b4 14 e5 ♘e8 15 ♘d5! ♕xd2 16 ♘xe7+ ♔f8 17 ♖xd2 d5!? 18 ♗g5 f6 19 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 20 ♘d4! gives White a large advantage.

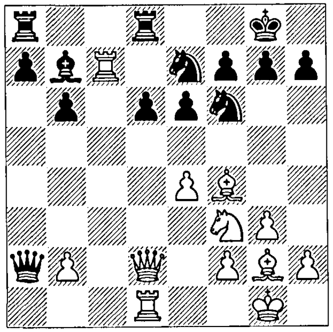
1c) 13...♕a6 14 ♘d4!? (14 e5 ♘e8 15 ♗f1 ♕a5 16 b4 ♕a3! gets White nowhere) and Black's problems with his queen persist.

1d) Black does best to ignore the threats with 13...♘c6!? 14 ♘d5 ♕xa2 (14...exd5 15 ♖xc4 dxc4 16 ♘h4 {or 16 ♕e2} is clearly better for White), whereupon White faces a tough decision:

1d1) 15 ♖a1 wins material, but after 15...♕c4 (15...♕b3? 16 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 17 ♘d4 traps the black queen; the same goes for 15...♘xe4? 16 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 17 ♕c2) 16 ♖dc1 exd5! (better than 16...♕b5?! 17 ♖xc6 exd5 18 ♘d4 and 16...♘xe4 17 ♖xc4 ♘xd2 18 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 19 ♗xd2, which both favour White) 17 ♖xc4 dxc4 Black gets a better version of the 14...exd5 bracket, with unclear play.

1d2) More interesting is the sacrificial 15 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 16 ♖c7 *(D)* (after 16 ♖a1 ♕c4! 17 ♖dc1 ♕b5 the queen escapes), and now:

1d21) 16...♗xe4 17 ♖xe7 ♘d5 18 ♖xf7! (after 18 ♗g5 h6 19 ♗h4 ♘xe7 20 ♗xe7, 20...♖d7 21 ♘e5 ♖xe7 22 ♕xd6 ♗xg2 23 ♕xe7 gives White at least a draw; more ambitious is 20...♖dc8!? 21 ♗xd6 ♕d5) 18...♗xf3 19 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 20 ♗h6+ ♔f7 21 ♗xf3 is no fun for Black; White has a strong attack.



1d22) 16...♘xe4 17 ♕e1 (this cuts down Black's options; after 17 ♕e2 due to the fork on c3 White must reckon not only with 17...♘d5, but also 17...♘g6 or 17...♖ac8!?) 17...♘d5 (the alternative 17...♘g6 18 ♖xb7 ♘c5 19 ♖c7 is good for White; his activity outweighs Black's pawns) and now:

1d221) 18 ♖xb7 ♘c5 (18...♘xf4? 19 ♕xe4 ♘xg2 20 ♘g5 gives White a direct attack) 19 ♖xf7!? (Black is better after 19 ♖a1? ♕xb2 20 ♖bxa7 ♖xa7 21 ♖xa7 ♘d3) 19...♔xf7 20 ♘g5+ ♔g8 21 b4 ♘xf4 22 gxf4 h6 23 bxc5 hxg5 and with Black's queen taking part in the defence, White's most prudent choice is to force a perpetual with 24 ♗d5.

1d222) Better is 18 ♕xe4! ♘xc7 19 ♕xb7 and again it's not easy to cope with White's well-coordinated minor pieces; e.g., 19...♕b3 20 ♖c1 ♘b5 21 ♘g5 ♖f8 22 ♗e4! with a dangerous attack.

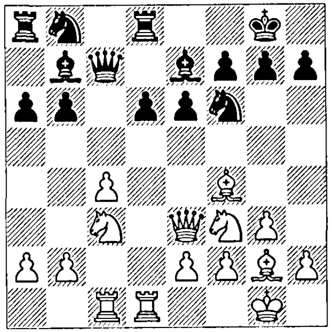
2) However, entering all these adventures is impractical and unnecessary for Black; it's safer to think about development: 12...♘bd7 13 ♕e1 (after 13 ♗xd6? ♘f8 the pin costs White material: 14 ♘b5 ♘e4 15 ♕b4 ♘xd6 16 ♘xd6 ♖xd6! 17 ♖xd6 ♕c7 18 ♖cd1 ♖d8) 13...♘f8 14 ♘b5 ♘e8 15 h4 a6 16 ♘c3 ♕c7 17 ♗e3 ♖ab8 gives Black a somewhat passive but fully playable position, as is often the case in the Hedgehog, Romanishin-Guil.Garcia, Leningrad 1977.

Surprisingly, after the text-move Van Wely gets to play ...♘d7 only nine moves later, when it will already be too late.

13 ♕e3

The alternative 13 ♘a4 ♘bd7 14 ♕b4 forces the positional concession 14...a5. On the other hand though, this costs White precious time and after 15 ♕a3 (15 ♕b3 ♘c5 is only equal) 15...♘c4 16 ♘d4!? ♘ec5 (the tactics after 16...e5 17 ♗xe5! ♘xe5 18 ♘xb6 work well for White) Black has a defensible position.

13 ... ♕c7 *(D)*



14 ♗h3!?

White continues his strategy of piece-play and creates the direct threat ♘d5. Another interesting plan deserving attention was 14 ♘a4 ♘bd7 15 b4. White threatens c5 and Black's forces are placed so unhappily that this advance is not so easy to meet:

1) 15...♗c6? 16 c5! bxc5 17 ♘xc5 (17 bxc5 ♘d5 18 ♖xd5 exd5 19 ♘b6!? ♘xb6 20 cxb6 ♕b7 21 ♘d4 is also strong) 17...♘xc5 18 bxc5 ♘d5 19 ♖xd5! exd5 20 ♘d4 and the pins will cost Black dearly.

2) 15...♕c6 16 ♕b3 ♘h5 17 ♗xd6! (17 ♘e1 ♘xf4 18 ♗xc6 ♘xe2+ is OK for Black) 17...♗xd6 18 ♘e1 and White wins a pawn.

3) 15...♘g4 16 ♕b3 and now:

3a) 16...♗c6?! 17 c5! bxc5 (after 17...♗xa4 18 ♕xa4 bxc5 19 ♘d4! ♘b6 20 ♕c6 ♕a7 21 bxc5 dxc5 22 ♗c7! White wins material) 18 ♘xc5 ♗d5 (18...e5 19 ♘e6! fxe6 20 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 21 ♖xc6 ♕xc6 22 ♘g5 and because of the smothered mate Black must give up his queen) 19 ♘xe6 ♗xb3 20 ♘xc7 ♗xd1 21 ♘xa8 ♗xe2 22 ♘d4 is terrible for Black.

3b) 16...e5 17 ♗g5!? ♗xg5 18 ♘xg5 ♗xg2 19 ♔xg2 is also not ideal for Black; White is better.

4) Black's best bet is 15...♗f8!, since by improving the position of the bishop he robs White of most of the aforementioned tactical motifs. After 16 c5 bxc5 (following 16...♕c6 17 ♘xb6 ♘g4 18 ♘e1! ♘xe3 19 ♗xc6 Black loses a pawn) 17 ♘xc5 (17 bxc5? is weak due to 17...♕a5) 17...♘xc5 18 bxc5 ♘d5 (after 18...e5 19 c6! ♗xc6 20 ♘d4 exd4 21 ♕xd4 White regains the piece with a positional advantage) 19 ♕d2 ♘xf4 20 ♕xf4 e5 21 cxd6 ♕xd6! 22 ♖xd6 exf4 23 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 24 gxf4 ♗a3 Black has enough play to hold the game.

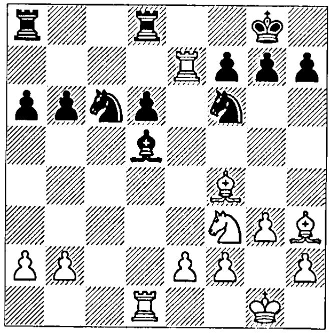
14 ... ♕c5?

This active move is the last straw, and ruins Black's position beyond repair. Development must wait for the time being:

1) 14...♘c6? runs into the typical blow 15 ♘d5!, with a large advantage for White.

2) 14...♘bd7? doesn't work tactically due to 15 ♗xe6! (15 ♘d5 exd5 16 ♕xe7 ♖e8 is less convincing for White) 15...♗xf3 (15...fxe6 loses on the spot to 16 ♕xe6+ ♔f8 17 ♘g5) 16 ♗h3 and White advantageously wins the piece back.

3) Again stronger was 14...♗f8!? 15 ♘d5 (White achieves nothing after 15 ♘a4 ♘bd7 16 b4 ♖ac8!) 15...exd5 16 cxd5 ♕e7 17 ♕xe7 ♗xe7 18 ♖c7 ♗xd5! (18...♘xd5? loses a pawn to 19 ♖xb7 ♘xf4 20 gxf4) 19 ♖xe7 ♘c6 *(D)* and now:



3a) 20 ♖c7 ♘e8! 21 ♖d7 ♗xa2 22 ♗xd6 ♖xd7 23 ♗xd7 ♖d8! is only equal.

3b) 20 ♖e3!? keeps more tension in the position, but after 20...♗xa2 21 ♗g5 (21 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 22 ♗xd6 ♖d8 leaves White's forces misplaced; 21 b3 ♘b4 also isn't ideal for White, as he is unable to trap the bishop) 21...♗c4 22 ♘d4 White's compensation isn't enough for a tangible advantage.

15 ♘d5!

Nikolić uncorks a beautiful positional sacrifice, based on the surprising connection of White's lead in development and zugzwang motifs. We should be grateful he didn't choose the more mundane 15 ♘a4 ♕h5 (15...♕xe3 is out of the question due to 16 ♗xe3 b5 17 ♘b6 ♗xf3 18 exf3 ♖a7 19 cxb5 axb5 20 ♘c8) 16 ♗g2 (16 ♕xb6? loses a piece to 16...♗xf3, while the artificial 16 ♔g2?! h6! 17 ♘xb6 g5 is far from clear) and now:

1) 16...e5? loses at once to 17 ♕xb6 ♗c6 18 ♘xe5.

2) 16...b5 17 ♘b6 ♘g4 18 ♕a3 ♖a7 19 h3 is also unsuitable for Black.

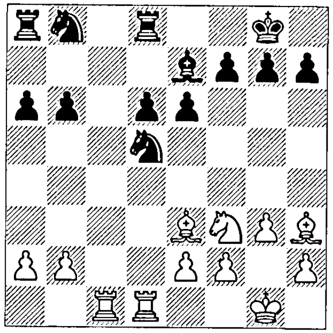
3) 16...♘bd7 17 ♗xd6! (17 ♘xb6 ♘g4 18 ♕b3 is also possible, but is less clear-cut) 17...♘g4 18 ♕b3 ♗xd6 (18...♗g5 19 h3! ♗xc1 20 hxg4 ♕h6 21 ♗e7 leaves Black dead lost) 19 ♖xd6 ♗xf3 20 exf3 ♕xh2+ 21 ♔f1. Black's attack is over and his queenside falls apart.

4) 16...♘g4 17 ♕xb6 ♗xf3 18 exf3 ♕xh2+ 19 ♔f1 ♘d7 20 ♕b7 gives White a clear advantage.

15 ... ♗xd5

Black has little choice. 15...exd5? 16 ♕xe7 ♘c6 17 ♕xb7 ♖a7 18 b4 and 15...♕xe3 16 ♘xe7+ ♔f8 17 ♗xe3 ♔xe7 18 ♗xb6 are both hopeless for him, while 15...♘xd5 16 cxd5 can lead, after 16...♕xe3 17 ♗xe3 ♗xd5 18 ♖xd5, to the game position.

16 cxd5 ♕xe3
17 ♗xe3 ♘xd5 *(D)*



18 ♖xd5!

Consistent; otherwise the whole operation makes little sense.

18 ... exd5

19 ♗xb6 ♖f8

After 19...♖e8 Black can't play ...f5, while ...♗d8 runs into ♖c8. White doesn't even have to bother with 20 ♗c8 a5 (20...♘c6 is weaker in view of 21 ♗d7) 21 ♗b7 ♘d7 22 ♗xa8 ♘xb6 23 ♗b7, since it is better to play for domination with 20 b4!, as in the game.

20 b4!

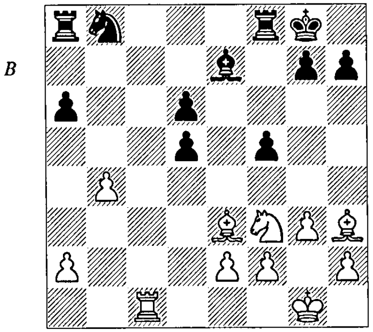
There is no hurry. 20 ♗c8? ♘c6! 21 ♗b7 ♖ab8 would be a great relief for Black. White's main task is to keep both the a8-rook and b8-knight out of play; Black is starting to run out of moves.

20 ... f5

After 20...♗d8 (20...a5 21 b5 keeps Black bottled in) 21 ♗xd8! (21 ♗e3 a5 22 b5 a4 is also quite dreary for Black after 23 ♗f4 or 23 ♖b1!?, but at least it gives him a whiff of air) 21...♖xd8 22 ♖c7 White intends ♘g5 and the paralysis persists; e.g., 22...h6 23 ♘d4 ♔f8 24 ♗g2 ♘d7 25 ♗xd5 ♖ac8 26 ♖a7 and another pawn falls.

After the text-move, Black is ready to play ...♘d7.

21 ♗e3! *(D)*



Sometimes beauty has simple forms. This retreat was the final move Nikolić had to foresee, as it prevents the only reasonable way Black could untangle his army.

21 ... ♘d7

There were still ways to avoid immediate losses:

1) 21...g5 22 ♘xg5 d4 23 ♗d2 ♗xg5 24 ♗xg5 ♖a7 retains the extra exchange, but with all his pawns isolated Black is more or less helpless against the active bishops after, for example, 25 ♖c4. For a similar material balance see Game 33.

2) Somewhat better is 21...♗d8 22 ♘d4 ♘d7 (22...g6? is bad due to 23 ♗g2; Black also loses the exchange after 22...♗b6 23 ♘e6!? ♗xe3 24 fxe3) 23 ♘xf5 ♗b6 24 ♘e7+ (or even 24 ♗f4!?). Black will in all probability lose both d-pawns and the material advantage will pass to White. However, this continuation offers at least practical chances, whereas in the game White now levels the material balance and converts his decisive positional plus into victory.

22 ♖c7 ♖ad8

23 ♘d4

A triple attack! White simultaneously hits c6, e6 and f5, and wins the exchange back.

23 ... ♗f6

24 ♘e6 g6

24...d4 25 ♘xf8 ♘xf8 (25...♔xf8 is even worse due to 26 ♗f4) 26 ♗d2 is no improvement for Black.

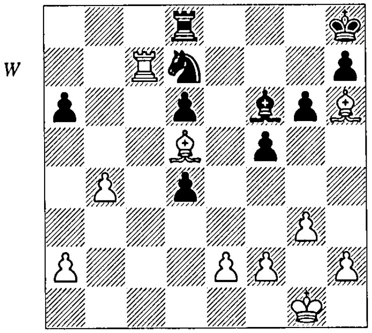
25 ♗g2 d4

26 ♗h6 ♖fe8

Otherwise Black would lose even more material.

27 ♘xd8 ♖xd8

28 ♗d5+ ♔h8 *(D)*



29 h4

If one would want to reproach White, it could only be at this moment. After the more exact 29 f4!? ♘b6 30 ♗b3 Black has no sensible moves and the threats are ♖f7 or ♖c6. Still, the text-move doesn't spoil anything, as White's pieces are far more active and it's only a matter of time before Black's weak pawns start to drop. In the final phase of the game Nikolić doesn't give his opponent any real chances.

29 ... ♘e5

30 ♗g5 ♗xg5

31 hxg5 d3

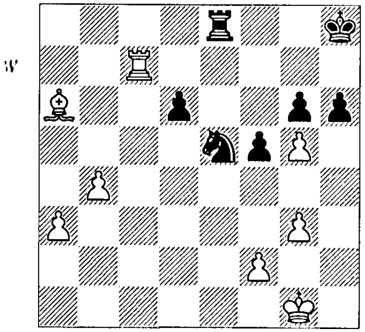
32 exd3 ♘xd3

33 a3 ♖e8

34 ♗c4 ♘e5

35 ♗xa6 h6 *(D)*

A desperate attempt to free himself from possible back-rank mates and gain some counterplay. 35...d5 36 f4 ♘g4 37 ♖c8 is hopeless for Black.



36 gxh6 d5

37 a4

37 f4!? ♘g4 38 ♖c8 also wins, but White doesn't want to exchange his active rook.

37 ... d4

After 37...♖d8 38 a5 d4 39 f4 White's pawns decide the issue.

38 ♖c5 d3

39 ♔g2 g5

39...d2 40 ♖d5 ♖a8 41 ♗b5 also costs Black his last hope.

40 ♗b5 ♖e6

41 ♖d5 1-0

Summary

When playing the Hedgehog, Black should bear in mind that achieving the typical set-up with pawns on their third rank is not the ultimate goal he is striving for. Especially in the lines with 6...♗e7 and 8...0-0, where the d-pawn stays on d7 longer, Black can often achieve ...d5 in one go, thus rendering ...a6 wholly unnecessary. In this respect Van Wely's 9...d6 and especially 12...a6?! were both inaccurate. However, although White's lead in development gave him tactical chances, the semi-closed nature of the position limited White's edge and still made it playable for Black. This shows in the line 14 ♘a4 ♘bd7 15 b4, when Black manages by clever prophylaxis to cope with a radical pawn advance.

However, all this changes once the position opens up and Black's queenside remains asleep. Especially the latter condition is important, as after the correct 14...♗f8!? the tactical operation 15 ♘d5 allows him to coordinate all his pieces. This was no longer possible after 14...♕c5?, as an instructive exchange sacrifice gave White a vice-like grip on the position, maintained by the impressive quiet moves 20 b4! and 21 ♗e3!. Then all attempts to activate his undeveloped pieces cost Black material and after he missed his best practical chance with 21...♗d8 Nikolić convincingly wrapped up the game.

Game 35

Alexander Nenashev – Kiril Georgiev

Recklinghausen 1998

Benko Gambit [A59]

1 d4 ♘f6

2 c4 c5

3 d5 b5

4 cxb5

Tarrasch once said that, with the exception of the Queen's Gambit, you could only refute a gambit by accepting it. As far as the Benko is concerned, this is certainly the main line.

4 ... a6

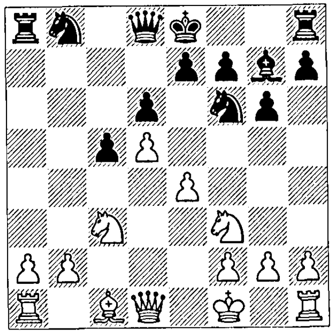
5 bxa6

Following on in the spirit of the previous note. For the topical continuation 5 f3, which is based on a wholly different motivation, see Game 6.

5 ... ♗xa6
6 ♘c3 d6
7 e4

White immediately occupies the centre, but the artificial castling it involves will cost him time.

7 ... ♗xf1
8 ♔xf1 g6
9 ♘f3 ♗g7 *(D)*



10 h3!?

This is Nenashev's pet line, with which he has scored quite a few instructive wins. The more usual alternative is 10 g3 0-0 11 ♔g2 ♘bd7. Now it seems that White has saved a whole move, but the issue is not that simple. The move h3 is also useful prophylaxis, designed to prevent the possible manoeuvre ...♘g4-e5. Then:

1) 12 ♖e1 and now:

1a) 12...♘g4 13 ♕e2 ♘ge5 14 ♘d2 (14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 f4 ♘d7 16 ♗d2 ♘b6! 17 b3 c4 18 ♖ac1 ♖a3 19 bxc4 ♕c8 20 ♖c2 ♕xc4 21 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 22 ♘b1 ♖a4 and Black is in no danger of losing, Livshits-D.Gurevich, Toronto 1998) 14...♘b6 15 f4 ♘ed7 16 a4 ♖a7 17 a5 ♕a8 18 ♕b5 ♖b8 19 axb6 ♖xa1 20 ♕xd7 ♗xc3! 21 bxc3 ♕a2 22 ♕a7 ♖xb6! 23 ♕xb6 ♖xc1 24 ♖e2 ♖c2 25 ♕d8+ ♔g7 26 ♕xe7 ♖xd2 27 ♖xd2 ♕xd2+ 28 ♔h3 ♕e2 29 e5 ♕f1+ 30 ♔h4 ♕e2 is a long line by Vaïsser, at the end of which White can't avoid perpetual check.

1b) If Black distrusts the preceding tactical complications, 12...♖a6!? is a valid alternative. White often plays 13 h3 anyway, as the immediate 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 15 ♖xe5 ♕d7 16 ♕f3 ♖b8 17 ♖e2 ♖d8! gives Black enough counterplay; e.g., 18 ♗e3 ♘xd5 19 ♗xc5? ♗xc3! 20 bxc3 ♖f6 and suddenly White is lost.

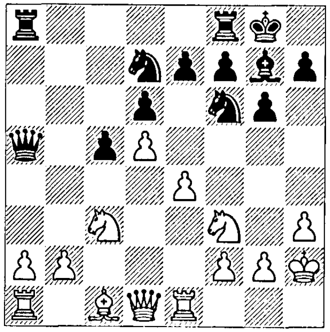
2) Although formal statistics show that White plays 12 h3 slightly less often than 12 ♖e1, in reality it's the main continuation. As indicated above, even in line '1', 13 h3 is White's most usual follow-up against replies other than 12...♘g4. Now Black can play 12...♕a5 13 ♖e1 ♖fb8 just as in our game, but equally popular and more enterprising is 12...♖a6!?. The idea is to coordinate Black's typical queenside play with a blow against White's centre. After 13 ♖e1 ♕a8 14 ♗g5 h6 (even the more typical 14...♖b8 15 ♕d2 ♖b4 is playable and gives Black compensation) 15 ♗d2 e6 16 dxe6 fxe6 Black is ready to play ...d5, exerting unpleasant pressure against White's king on the long diagonal. This position is currently assessed as unclear.

10 ... 0-0
11 ♔g1 ♘bd7
12 ♔h2 ♕a5

The opening phase is more or less over and both sides start carrying out their strategic plans. White must first safeguard his queenside. If he manages to contain Black's play without serious positional concessions he can turn his attention to the centre and Black's king with great effect. However, this is not so simple, as Black's pressure on the two semi-open files has a permanent character and he has various motifs to increase it: ...♘e8-c7-b5 or ...♘b6-a4 exchanging White's defensive knight on c3, ...♖b8-b4, indirectly targeting e4 and doubling rooks on the b-file, a timely ...♗xc3 to split White's queenside pawns, etc. With White's king in a safe haven on h2 the whole plan with 12...♖a6 described above loses most of its punch, but one of the ideas is to post a knight on c4, where it seriously inhibits White's activity. However, the immediate 12...♘b6 13 ♕c2!? (Black realizes his plan after the mechanical 13 ♖e1 ♘fd7! 14 ♕c2 ♘c4 15 ♕e2 ♘db6 16 ♔g1 ♖a7 17 ♕c2 e6!? 18 a4 exd5 19 exd5 ♕d7 20 b3 ♘a5 with counterplay against the weak d-pawn, Dumitrache-Baklan, Enakievo 1997; this game shows that undermining the pawn-centre can sometimes be effective in the 10 h3!? line) 13...♕d7 14 a4 (14 ♖e1!?) 14...♖fb8 15 ♖c1 ♘c4 16 ♖b1 ♘h5, as in Dumitrache-Nisipeanu, Bucharest Ciocaltea mem 1995, is not ideal for Black, as now 17 ♘b5 gives White an advantage.

Georgiev plays the most usual move.

13 ♖e1 *(D)*



13 ... ♖fb8

Very logical, but with the queen ready to support the knight on c4 from a6, the less tested 13...♘b6!? deserves attention:

1) The direct 14 e5?! runs into 14...dxe5 15 ♘xe5 ♘bxd5! 16 ♘xd5 ♘xd5, when Black is more than OK.

2) If White tries to play by analogy to the game with 14 ♖e2 ♘fd7 15 ♖c2 ♘c4, he has problems disentangling his queenside, as 16 ♕c2?! ♘a3! is advantageous for Black.

3) 14 ♕e2 ♕a6! leads to a satisfactory position for Black, similar to one arising in note '3' to Black's 15th move.

4) The most promising continuation is 14 ♕c2 ♖fb8 15 ♘d1!?, although even here after 15...♕a6 16 ♗d2 ♖b7 17 a3 ♘c4 18 ♗c3 ♕a4 19 ♖c1 ♗h6 20 ♕xa4 ♖xa4 21 ♖c2 ♘d7 Black isn't devoid of compensation, Arlandi-Borgo, Reggio Emilia 1991/2.

14 ♖e2

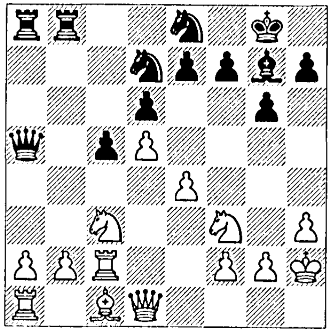
To develop his bishop White must protect b2. An ideal way to do this is doubling the rooks on the second rank; the practical examples below will show that this effectively stops Black's initiative. 14 ♕c2 runs contrary to this plan and after 14...♘e8 15 ♗d2 ♘c7 16 ♘d1 ♕a4 17 ♕c1!? ♘b5 18 ♘c3 ♕a6 19 a4 ♘c7 20 ♖a3 ♖b6 21 ♘d1 ♖ab8 White's queenside remains vulnerable, Gabriel-Sermek, Pula Z 2000.

14 ... ♘e8

14...♖b4 is not ideal, as White changes his plan and protects e4 with 15 ♕c2!?, when the exposed rook on b4 will give him an extra tempo for the manoeuvre ♗d2-c3. Nenashev has shown how to meet 14...♖b7: 15 ♖c2 ♖ab8 16 ♕e2 ♘e8 17 ♔g1 ♘c7 18 ♗g5!? ♔f8 (the endgame after 18...♖xb2 19 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 20 ♕xb2 ♗xc3 21 ♗d2 ♗xb2 22 ♗xa5 ♗xa1 23 ♗xc7 favours White; e.g., 23...c4 24 a4 ♘c5 25 a5 ♘a6 26 ♗b6 e6 27 e5!) 19 ♖ac1 ♘a6 20 a3 ♘c7 21 ♗f4 ♕a6 22 ♕d2 ♔g8 23 ♗g5 ♖e8 24 ♖e1 ♘b6 25 ♕c1 ♘c4 26 ♘d1 ♘a5 27 ♘d2 and as b2 is well protected, White is better, Nenashev-Kunte, Calcutta 1996.

15 ♖c2 *(D)*

After 15 ♗g5 White must seriously reckon with 15...♗xc3!? (15...♖xb2? doesn't work due to 16 ♖xb2 ♗xc3 17 ♗d2) 16 bxc3 f6 17 ♗d2 ♕a4, followed by ...♘b6-c4. The text-move prevents this possibility.



15 ... ♕a6

Again, Nenashev's games have provided some textbook examples of how White can gradually limit Black's play and then take over the initiative:

1) 15...♘c7?! 16 ♗g5 ♔f8 (16...♗xc3 17 bxc3 f6 18 ♗d2 is different from the note to White's 15th move, as here Black can't prevent White from playing c4) 17 ♖ac1 ♘a6 (17...♘b5 18 ♘xb5 ♕xb5 19 b3 ♖a3 20 ♖e2 ♕a6 21 ♖cc2 ♘e5 22 ♘xe5 ♗xe5+ 23 f4 ♗g7 24 e5 h6 25 ♗h4 is no improvement for Black, Nenashev-Van der Weide, Groningen open 1997) 18

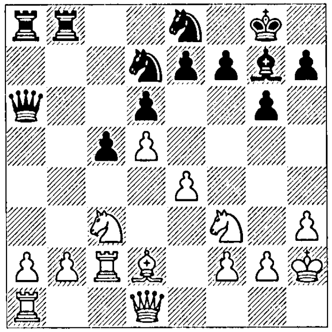
♖e2 ♘b4 19 a3 ♘a6 20 ♕d2 ♖b3 21 ♗h6 ♖ab8 22 ♖c2 ♕d8 23 ♕f4 ♗xh6 24 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 25 ♘g5 ♘f8 26 f4 ♘c7 27 e5 and White's attack quickly decided the game Nenashev-Permiakov, Omsk 1996.

2) A possible improvement is 15...♖b4!? 16 ♗d2 ♕a6, when White finds it hard to reach the desired set-up with his rooks on the second rank.

3) Black's best plan is 15...♘b6 16 ♕e2 ♕a6!. This move requires some explanation, as Black strives for an endgame despite being a pawn down. However, as White's ultimate plan is a kingside attack, a timely queen swap is a good way to avoid the fate of Nenashev's above opponents. After 17 ♗g5 (17 e5 ♕xe2 18 ♖xe2 ♘c4 and 17 ♕xa6 ♖xa6 18 ♗g5 ♘a4 are both worse; it is then White who has to be careful; somewhat better is 17 ♕e3!?) 17...♕xe2 18 ♖xe2 ♗xc3!? 19 bxc3 f6 20 ♗c1 ♘c4 21 ♘e1 ♔f7 22 ♘d3 ♘c7 23 f3 ♖a4 24 ♘f2 ♔e8 25 ♘d1 ♔d7 26 ♗f4 ♖ba8 27 ♗g3 ♖8a7 White could make nothing of his isolated extra a-pawn in Nenashev-Züger, Geneva 1999. This impressed the Uzbek-born GM so much that he switched to 5 e3 in later games.

16 ♗d2 *(D)*

B



16 ... ♘e5?

A serious strategic mistake. Black loses time and provokes White to play f4, a move that anyway fits into his plans. Moreover, Georgiev exchanges his more active knight, which protects the important e5-square and could still possibly end up on c4, while the e8-knight has no such rosy future. The alternatives were:

1) The direct 16...♘b6 17 b3 c4?! gets Black nowhere: 18 b4 ♘a4 (18...♕a3 19 ♖b1 is no improvement for Black) 19 a3 gives White a large advantage.

2) Better is 16...♖b4, transposing to note '2' to Black's 15th move.

3) Another good move, which has been tested in practice, is 16...♘c7. After 17 ♖ac1 ♘b5!? (17...♖b4 18 ♕e1 ♕d3 19 a3 ♖b3 20 ♗g5 ♖e8 21 ♘d2 ♖bb8 22 ♕f1 ♕xf1 23 ♖xf1 ♘b5 24 ♘xb5 ♖xb5 25 b3 ♔f8 26 ♗e3 ♖a8 27 a4 ♖bb8 and once again in the endgame White finds it hard to make further progress, Tregubov-S.Kasparov, Rowy 1999) 18 ♘xb5 ♕xb5 19 b3 ♖a3 White doesn't have enough time to regroup his rooks and defend a2. Then 20 ♗g5 f6 21 ♗e3 ♖ba8 22 ♕d2 ♕a5 23 b4 ♕xb4 24 ♕xb4 cxb4 25 ♖c7 ♘c5 26 ♗xc5 dxc5 27 ♖1xc5 ♖xa2 gave Black enough counterplay in Jelling-K.Berg, Danish Ch (Odense) 1988.

17 ♘xe5 ♗xe5+
18 f4 ♗g7
19 ♕f3

White has strengthened his influence in the centre and is clearly better. The switch from restraint to activity is approaching.

19 ... ♖b4

This sortie is no longer effective. Still, even after the more logical 19...♘c7 20 ♖e1 ♘b5 21 ♘xb5 ♕xb5 (21...♖xb5 22 b3 is similar) 22 b3 ♖a7 White can achieve the ideal deployment of his forces by 23 ♖e2, while 23 e5!? ♖ba8 24 a4 might be even stronger.

20 ♖e1 ♖d4
21 ♖e3! *(D)*

White is patient and doesn't mind making another prophylactic move. The premature 21 e5?! would only weaken the d5-pawn and after 21...♕d3! 22 ♕xd3 ♖xd3, intending ...♘c7, Black could breathe a sigh of relief.

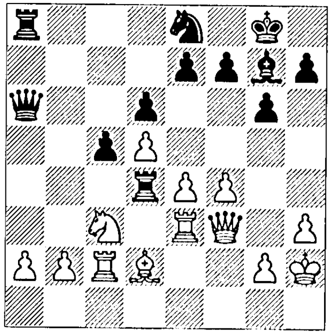
21 ... ♖b4

The exposed rook must return anyway. After 21...♘c7, 22 b3 threatens ♘e2 and forces Black to transpose back into the game by 22...♖b4.

22 b3 ♘c7

To generate counterplay Black moves the knight over, but deserts the kingside and allows White to exchange his sole defensive piece - the g7-bishop. However, it's not easy to suggest improvements, as after 22...c4 23 ♘e2 cxb3 24 axb3 (after 24 ♖c6? bxa2! 25 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 Black equalizes) 24...♖b6 25 ♖d3 (25 e5!?) White can quickly turn his attention to the other flank

W



and start supporting his extra passed pawn with ♘d4-c6.

23 ♘e2 ♖b7
24 ♗c3 ♘b5

This costs a tempo, but even after 24...♗xc3 25 ♖exc3 ♘b5 26 ♖e3 White is clearly better, and 26...c4 27 bxc4 ♘a3 28 ♖c1 ♘xc4 29 ♖ec3 doesn't make life any easier for Black.

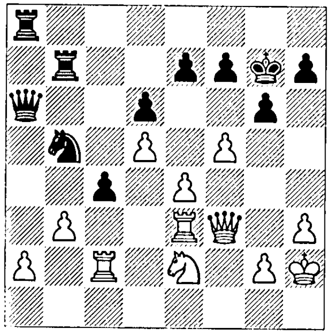
25 ♗xg7 ♔xg7
26 f5!

White's strategy triumphs and the attack starts. And it's very dangerous, as Black's major pieces are stranded on the queenside.

26 ... c4! *(D)*

Georgiev aims for counterplay; 26...♘d4? 27 ♘xd4 cxd4 28 ♖d3 is utterly hopeless.

W



27 ♕g3!?

White doesn't allow himself to be distracted. 27 bxc4?! is weaker, since after 27...♘a3 Black has access to e5; the same goes for 27 ♖xc4 ♕xa2 28 ♕g3 ♕a1!?.

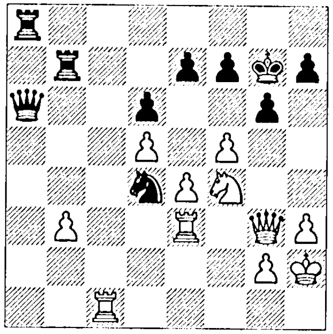
27 ... ♘a3?!

Black's endangered position can't stand further wasted tempi.

The more natural 27...cxb3 28 ♖xb3 (28 axb3 ♕a1 29 ♘f4 ♕e5!? is similar to 27 ♖xc4 in the note to White's 27th move and slows down White's attack) 28...♘a3 29 ♖xb7! (29 ♖c6? ♖xb3 30 ♖xa6 ♖xg3 31 ♖xa8 ♖e3 would certainly suit Black; 29 ♖cb2?! ♖xb3 30 axb3 ♘b5 also seriously complicates White's task) 29...♕xb7 (29...♘xc2? loses to 30 ♕c3+ ♔g8 31 ♕c7!, as after 31...♕xe2 32 ♕xe7 ♖f8 33 f6 there is no defence against ♕xf8+) 30 ♕c3+ (30 ♖c6 ♕b2 31 ♘c3 ♘b1 is less convincing for White) 30...♔g8 31 ♖b2 is also no bed of roses for Black; White has a healthy extra pawn and all his pieces are more active. Still, Black can fight on after 31...♕a6 32 ♕c6 ♔g7!?.

28 ♖c1 cxb3
29 axb3 ♘b5
30 ♘f4 ♘d4 *(D)*

W



The result of Black's efforts is a weakness on b3, but it's still protected and on the other side of the board a real storm is brewing.

31 f6+! exf6

31...♔xf6? 32 ♘h5+! gxh5 33 e5+ ♔f5 34 ♕f2+ ♔g6 35 ♖g3+ mates. It doesn't take much longer after 31...♔g8 32 ♕g5! exf6 (32...♖xb3 33 ♖xb3 ♘xb3 34 ♕h6! exf6 35 ♘e6! fxe6 36 ♖c7 mates) 33 ♕xf6 ♘xb3 34 ♘h5! gxh5 (or 34...♔f8 35 ♕g7+ ♔e7 36 ♖f3) 35 ♖g3+ ♔f8 36 ♖g7, so the text-move is forced.

32 ♘h5+ ♔f8

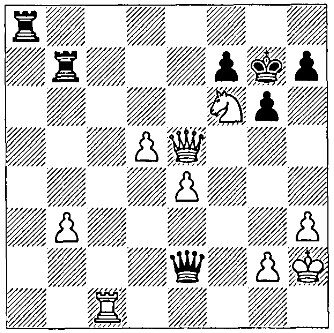
32...♔h8?! loses at once to 33 ♕h4! gxh5 (after 33...g5 34 ♕f2 f5 35 ♖c4 White wins the knight) 34 ♖g3! ♘f3+ 35 gxf3 ♕e2+ 36 ♖g2 ♕xf3 37 ♖f2.

33 ♘xf6 ♘e2

The condemned man can eat anything, but now Black loses by force. Nevertheless White's attack would have been decisive even after the less greedy 33...♔g7 34 ♕g5!; e.g., 34...♘xb3 (34...h6 35 ♘h5+ ♔h7 36 ♕f6 gxh5 37 ♖g3 mates) 35 ♘g4! ♔g8 36 ♕h6.

34 ♖xe2 ♕xe2
35 ♕xd6+ ♔g7
36 ♕e5 *(D)*

B



White has time to activate his rook and calmly prepare a decisive discovered check.

36 ... ♕d2

Black has no time to launch a counterattack, as 36...♖a2? 37 ♘g4+ leads to mate. He also can't escape the deadly queen and knight battery: 36...♔f8 37 ♘xh7+ ♔g8 38 ♘f6+ ♔f8 39 d6 is hopeless for Black.

37 ♖c3!?

An alternative solution was 37 ♘e8++:

1) 37...♔h6 38 ♕g7+ ♔h5 (38...♔g5 39 ♕f6+ ♔h5 40 ♘g7+ mates) 39 ♘f6+ ♔g5 40 ♖f1 and the threats of h4+ and ♖f5+ decide.

2) 37...♔f8 38 d6! f5 (38...f6 39 ♕xf6+ ♔xe8 40 ♕e6+ is even simpler: 40...♔d8 41 ♖f1! or 40...♔f8 41 ♖c8+) 39 ♖c7 ♖xc7 40 ♘xc7 ♖a7 (40...♖a2 41 ♕h8+ ♔f7 42 ♕xh7+ mates immediately) 41 ♕h8+ ♔f7 42 ♕xh7+ with an easy technical win.

However, Nenashev rightly feels no need to hurry the issue and indeed scores even faster.

37 ... h5
38 ♘e8++ ♔f8

38...♔h6 39 ♕h8+ ♔g5 40 ♖g3+ ♔f4 (or 40...♔h4 41 ♖g4#) 41 ♕h6+ picks up Black's queen.

39 ♘d6

39 d6?! allows 39...♕h6.

39 ... ♖d7

39...♖bb8 40 ♖c7 ♕h6 41 ♕e7+ mates in a few moves and after 39...♖ba7 the simplest is 40 ♘c8, when White wins a whole rook.

40 ♖c8+!

White rounds off the attack with an attractive finish.

1-0

40...♖xc8 (40...♖d8 41 ♕h8+) 41 ♕h8+ ♔e7 42 ♘xc8# leads to a pretty mate.

Summary

If White accepts the Benko Gambit, he subjects himself to long-term positional pressure and it usually takes quite some time before he can start pursuing active goals of his own. This requires a lot of patience (see 21 ♖e3!) and a well-planned course of action. Nenashev has obviously studied the 10 h3!? line deeply and knows very well how his pieces should be placed in case Black uses any of the motifs mentioned in the note to move 12. The prophylactic idea that repeats itself in his games is overprotection of one of the queenside pawns via the second rank, while the other pawn advances to a3 or b3 respectively. Georgiev on the other hand makes all the typical Benko moves, rejecting such interesting alternatives as 13...♘b6!? or 15...♖b4!?. However, one can hardly blame him, as up to a certain point he plays consistently and strategically soundly. However, understanding a particular line also involves knowing which pieces one needs and which can or should be exchanged. Thus 16...♘e5? not only wastes time, but especially exchanges the completely wrong piece; the notes show that ...♘c7-b5 is more to the point. The crucial fact Black must realize is that in the whole Benko Accepted with 7 e4 it's more often than not advantageous for him to force the queens off; none of the resulting Benko endgames mentioned above gave White any substantial edge.

Our game clearly shows why this is so: the necessity for Black to keep his pieces committed to the queenside is another factor which improves White's attacking chances. One can hardly say if Black made any more errors after move 16, the clear exception being 27...♘a3?!, again omitting to make a necessary exchange with 27...cxb3. With only one pair of rooks, Georgiev would still have been able to struggle, albeit in a highly suspect position. Afterwards he got no second chance; after 31 f6+! White crowned his strategy with a lethal assault.

Game 36

Alexei Shirov – Joel Lautier

Spanish Team Championship, Salamanca 1998

Sicilian Defence [B30]

1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3

A short reminder of one of the great classics: 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♘ge2 e5?! 4 ♘d5! ♘f6 5 ♘ec3 ♗c7 6 ♗c4 0-0 7 d3 h6 8 f4 d6 9 f5 b6 10 h4! ♗b7 11 a3 ♖c8 12 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13 ♕h5 ♘e7 14 ♗g5! d5 15 ♗xf6 dxc4 16 ♕g4 and White was winning in Fischer-Naranja, Meralco 1967. The connection between this model example and the current game will become apparent soon enough.

2 ... ♘c6
3 ♘c3 e5!?

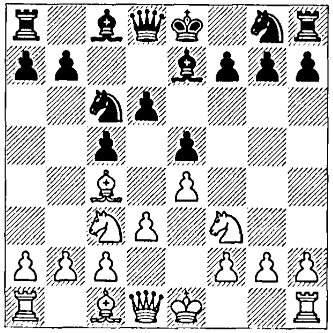
Lautier has a wide Sicilian repertoire (Najdorf, Taimanov, Sveshnikov, Dragon), so it's not a bad idea to let him disclose his intentions first. However, the text-move must have come as a surprise, as the French GM had never played it before.

4 ♗c4

Compared with the Fischer game above, White's control of the gaping hole on d5 is not so absolute and f4 also requires much more preparation. A heavy manoeuvring struggle starts, in which White relies on his slight lead in development and light-square control. Black on the other hand believes that in a closed position he can gradually neutralize these pluses and that he has enough pieces to fight successfully for the d5-square.

4 ... d6
5 d3 ♗e7 *(D)*
6 ♘d2

W



Currently this move still remains White's main try to get something tangible from the opening. Let's look at the other attempts:

1) The overaggressive 6 ♘g5? is insufficient: 6...♗xg5 7 ♕h5 ♗e7! 8 ♕xf7+ ♔d7 9 ♕xg7 ♘f6 10 f4 ♕f8 gives White only very vague compensation for the piece.

2) The immediate occupation of the central outpost is too direct and doesn't promise White anything: after 6 ♘d5 ♗e6 7 c3 ♘f6 8 0-0 0-0 the position is equal.

3) The once popular 6 0-0 ♘f6 7 ♘g5 0-0 8 f4 exf4 9 ♗xf4 h6 10 ♘f3 ♗e6 appears rarely nowadays:

3a) Black is well prepared for the older tactical assault 11 ♕d2 d5 12 exd5 ♘xd5 13 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 14 ♗xh6?! gxh6 15 ♕xh6, as 15...♖e8 16 ♔h1 ♘e5! (with the clever idea 17 ♘xe5 ♗g5) gave him a clear advantage in Landa-Gagarin, Bratislava 1990.

3b) 11 ♘d5!? ♗xd5 12 ♗xd5 (12 exd5 ♘b4 13 ♗d2 ♘bxd5 14 ♘h4 is an enterprising pawn sacrifice for the more adventurous types) 12...♘xd5 13 exd5 ♘e5 14 ♕d2 ♘xf3+ (the alternative 14...♗f6!? is also OK for Black) 15 ♖xf3 ♗g5 16 ♖af1 ♗xf4 17 ♕xf4 ♕d7 18 ♖g3 ♔h7 19 b4 b6 20 bxc5 bxc5 21 c4 ♖ae8 and Black equalized in Chandler-Krush, Hastings 2000.

6 ... ♗g5

Black adapts and also starts manoeuvring. Instead, 6...♘f6 7 ♘f1 ♗g4!? 8 f3 ♗e6 9 ♘e3 0-0 strives to finish development first, but as even here Black often plays ...♘e8 followed by ...♗g5, it's certainly no less logical to do so immediately.

7 h4

White can't transpose into the game with 7 ♕h5 g6 8 ♕d1 ♘f6 9 h4 because of 9...♗f4! with the point that 10 g3? fails to 10...♗g4. Too soft is 7 ♘f1 ♗xc1 8 ♖xc1 ♘ge7 (8...♘f6 9 ♘e3 0-0 10 0-0 ♘e7!? 11 ♕d2 ♗e6 is also playable) 9 ♘e3 0-0 10 0-0 ♔h8 11 ♕h5 ♘g6 12 ♘cd5 ♘f4 13 ♘xf4 exf4 14 ♘d5 ♘e5 15 f3 ♖g8 16 g3 fxg3 17 hxg3 ♗e6 18 ♘e3 g6 19 ♕h6, A.Sokolov-Krasenkov, Russian Ch (Elista) 1995. Now Krasenkov gives 19...g5! 20 ♗xe6 ♖g6 21 ♕h5 fxe6 with equality.

7 ... ♗h6

Subsequent practice has shown 7...♗xd2+!? to be a viable alternative. After 8 ♗xd2 ♘f6 9 ♘d5 ♘xd5 10 ♗xd5 ♕e7 11 f4 exf4 12 ♗xf4 ♘e5 (12...♗e6!?) 13 0-0 ♗e6 14 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 15 h5 h6 16 c3 f6 17 d4 cxd4 18 cxd4 ♘f7 19 ♕a4+ ♕d7 20 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 21 ♔f2 ♖ae8 22 ♖fe1 ♖e7 23 ♖e2 ♖he8 Black was very close to full equality in Shirov-Khuzman, Belgrade ECC final 1999, although later Shirov scored a full point thanks to superlative technique.

8 ♕h5!

White of course doesn't cherish hopes of giving a Scholar's Mate, but wants to force a weakness on the kingside, thus creating a target for the advancing h-pawn.

8 ... g6

9 ♕d1

The tempo win after 9 ♕f3?! ♗e6 is illusory, as the queen is misplaced on f3.

9 ... ♘f6 *(D)*

9...♘d4 10 h5 would in all probability transpose into the game, as 10...♕g5 11 ♔f1 only leaves the black queen exposed.

10 h5!

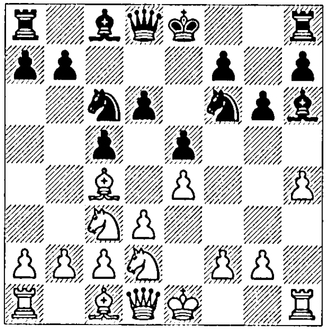
An energetic and ambitious continuation. The tamer alternative is 10 ♘f1 ♗xc1 11 ♕xc1 ♗e6 12 ♘e3 ♘e7!? 13 ♕d2 0-0 with an equal position, Hector-Schandorff, Reykjavik 1997.

10 ... ♘d4!?

A new move. We'll look at the weaker alternatives first:

1) 10...♗d7? 11 hxg6 hxg6 12 ♘f3! gives White a raging attack.

2) The greedy 10...♘xh5 is risky: 11 ♖xh5 gxh5 12 ♕xh5 ♗xd2+ (12...♕f6 13 ♘d5 leads to the same position) 13 ♗xd2 ♕f6 14 ♘d5 (14 ♘b5!?) 14...♕g6 15 ♕h4!, and now Black does best to return the loot with 15...♗e6 16 ♘c7+ ♔d7 17 ♘xa8 ♗xc4 18 dxc4 ♖xa8 19 0-0-0. White is better, as after 19...♕xg2 he has 20 ♗e3.



3) The stem game for 10 h5!, Fedorov-Morozevich, Kishinev 1998, went 10...♗g4 11 f3 ♗d7. Thus Black avoids line '1', but after 12 ♗d5! (12 hxg6 hxg6 13 ♘b3 ♗g7 14 ♖xh8+ ♗xh8 15 ♗g5 is only about equal; the b3-knight has been side-tracked from its route to e3) 12...♘xh5 13 ♘c4 ♗f8 14 g4 ♘f4 15 ♗xf4 exf4 16 ♕d2 ♘e5 (as played), Morozevich points out the strong 17 ♘xe5! (17 ♕xf4 is weaker due to 17...♕g5!) 17...dxe5 18 ♗xb7 ♖b8 19 ♗d5 ♖xb2 (otherwise White castles and is better) 20 ♗b3 c4 21 dxc4 ♗b4 22 ♕d3! 0-0 (22...♕a5? 23 0-0-0 ♗xc3 24 ♕xd7+ ♔f8 25 ♕d8+ and after the exchanges the c-pawn queens; 22...♗xg4 loses a piece to 23 0-0-0! ♕xd3 24 ♖xd3) 23 ♔f1 and after ♘d1 Black's compensation for the exchange will not be quite adequate.

11 hxg6 hxg6

12 ♘b3

12 ♘f1? is impossible due to 12...♗d2+. Lautier's novelty has also stopped White from playing 12 ♘f3 as 12...♘xf3+ forces 13 gxf3 and after 13...♘h5 Black has no reason to complain. However, on the other hand, the position of the knight on b3 is now fully justified, as it neutralizes Black's active d4-knight.

12 ... ♘g4?!

Although Black has been aiming for this strategically desirable exchange since move 6, it now costs a lot of time and gives White an initiative, which can be developed in straightforward fashion. Better was 12...♗g7 13 ♖xh8+ ♗xh8 14 ♗g5 (14 ♘xd4 cxd4 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 ♗xd5 ♕h4 17 ♕f3 ♗e6!? gives Black sufficient counterplay) 14...♘e6 15 ♕d2!? and although White retains a slight pull, it's far less than in the game.

13 ♗xh6

Shirov chooses the simplest solution. He naturally avoids the trap 13 f3?? ♗d2+! 14 ♔xd2 ♕g5+ and also the needlessly complicated 13 ♘d5, when Black can not only change his mind with 13...♗g7, but also has the interesting 13...♘xc2+! 14 ♕xc2 ♗d2+. Now both 15 ♗xd2 ♖xh1+ 16 ♔e2 ♘xf2! and 15 ♔xd2 ♖xh1 16 ♔c3 ♖h2 are far from clear.

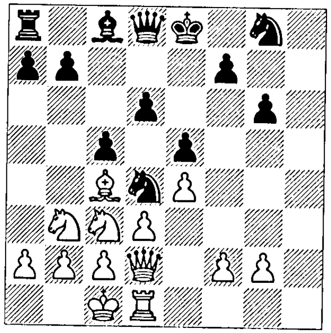
13 ... ♖xh6

14 ♖xh6 ♘xh6

15 ♕d2 ♘g8

15...♕h4 16 0-0-0 only makes matters worse for Black; ♘d5 or ♘xd4 and ♘b5 are in the air while Black's queen is burdened with the defence of the knight.

16 0-0-0 *(D)*



White has finished his development and the only open file will soon be in his hands; moreover, he can further pursue his initiative with f4. On the other hand all Black's pieces, with one notable exception, are on their initial squares.

16 ... ♗e6

Black can't contest the h-file, because after 16...♕h4? 17 ♘xd4 exd4 18 ♘d5 ♔f8 19 g3 this position would be critical: 19...♕h6 fails to 20 ♕xh6+ ♘xh6 21 ♖h1 ♔g7 22 ♘c7 and 8+.

17 ♘xd4 exd4

17...cxd4 18 ♘d5 is no improvement for Black and only gives White the extra resource ♕b4. 17...♗xc4 warrants a closer look, but the energetic 18 ♘c6! (18 ♘f5 ♗xa2! is unclear and after 18 dxc4 cxd4 19 ♘d5 ♘f6 20 ♖h1 ♔d7 Black is close to full equality) 18...bxc6 19 dxc4 forces 19...♔e7 20 f4, when Black has serious problems with his king.

18 ♘d5 ♔d7!?

Bizarre, but there was hardly anything else. 18...♕d7? loses on the spot to 19 ♗b5!, while after 18...♘f6? 19 ♗b5+! ♗d7 20 ♖h1 ♘h5 21 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 (21...♕xd7? 22 ♖xh5) 22 g4 ♘f6 23 ♕g5! the game won't last much longer. Following 18...♗xd5?! 19 ♗xd5 ♕e7 20 ♕f4 Black still can't develop since 20...♘f6 is met by 21 ♗xb7. Therefore Lautier tries to bring his king into safety by castling artificially.

19 ♖h1

A natural and strong move. 19 c3 ♘f6 20 cxd4 (20 ♕f4 achieves nothing in view of 20...♘h5) 20...♗xd5 21 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 22 exd5 cxd4 23 ♕f4 ♖c8+ 24 ♔b1 ♕e7 is unconvincing for White.

19 ... ♘f6

20 ♗b5+ ♔c8

21 ♘f4!

White avoids exchanges for the time being and wants to keep the a8-rook out of play as long as possible.

21 ... ♗d7?

This move loses more time, something Black can't afford. 21...♔c7? 22 ♘xe6+ fxe6 23 ♕g5 ♕e7 24 ♖h6 (or 24 e5!?) will quickly cost Black material without easing his predicament. A better alternative was 21...a6!? 22 ♘xe6 fxe6 23 ♗c4 d5 24 exd5 exd5 25 ♗b3 b5 26 c3! dxc3 27 ♕xc3. Although with his vulnerable king and shaky pawns Black's position remains unpleasant after 27...♔b7 28 ♕e5 or 27...♖a7!? 28 ♖h6, by limiting the scope of White's bishop he retains more defensive chances than in the game.

22 ♗c4 ♕e8

23 ♘d5!

After this strong technical move, White gains access to h7 and it will be difficult to challenge his powerful centralized bishop. However, Black's forces are so passive this is not the only way. An alternative that suggests itself is 23 c3!?, and now:

1) 23...♔c7 24 cxd4 cxd4 25 ♕a5+ b6 26 ♕g5! and White wins quickly; e.g., 26...♘g4 27 ♘d5+ ♔b7 28 ♗a6+!.

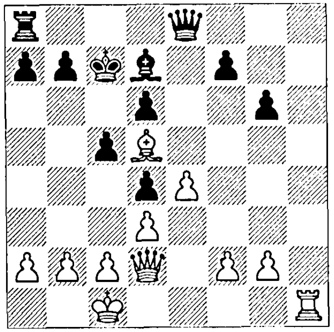
2) 23...dxc3 24 ♕xc3 ♕e5 (24...♕e7 25 ♖h8+ and now 25...♗e8? 26 ♕xf6! ♕xf6 27 ♖xe8+ ♔d7 28 ♗b5+ leads to mate, while after 25...♘e8 26 ♖h7 Black's position collapses) 25 ♖h8+ ♘e8 26 ♕xe5 dxe5 27 ♘c2 f6 28 ♗f7 and White gains a pawn without relinquishing the pressure.

3) The best try is 23...b5. Black frees b7 for his king, though after 24 ♗b3 (24 ♗d5?! dxc3 25 ♕xc3 ♘xd5 26 ♘xd5 ♔b7 is less promising for White) he can hardly avoid losses; e.g., 24...dxc3 (24...c4 25 dxc4 dxc3 26 ♕xd6! cxb2+ 27 ♔xb2 ♘xe4 28 ♕d4 and the threats of ♖h8 and ♖e1 decide) 25 ♕xc3 ♕e5 26 ♘d5! ♕xc3+ (26...♕g5+ 27 f4 ♕xg2 28 ♕e1! and White wins; e.g., 28...♘h5 29 ♕a5 or 28...♘e8 29 ♗d1 and ♘e3) 27 bxc3 ♘h5 28 ♖h4!? and, with g4 to follow, the rook enters decisively.

23 ... ♘xd5
24 ♗xd5 ♔c7 *(D)*

The only move, since 24...♗e6? loses immediately to 25 ♗xe6+ fxe6 26 ♖h7 and ♕h6, while 24...♗c6 25 ♕g5! ♔c7 26 ♖h7 is also hopeless for Black.

W



25 ♕a5+?!

Now after 25 ♖h7 ♗e6 White can't play 26 ♕f4?? due to 26...♗xd5 27 exd5 ♕e1#, so he must look for other inroads. Since the text-move gives Black a chance to ease the pressure by exchanging off the mighty d5-bishop, Shirov prefers the much stronger 25 b4!. This is the right moment to open up the position, since Black still can't consolidate his pawn-chain with ...b6. After the only sensible reply 25...♗e6 (25...f6 26 ♖h7 threatens ♗f7) 26 bxc5 dxc5 27 ♕f4+ ♔d7 28 ♕e5! (not 28 ♗xb7?, when 28...♕b8! 29 ♕xb8 ♖xb8 regains the pawn with equality) 28...♕e7 29 ♖h7 Black's defences are strained to the point of breaking.

25 ... b6
26 ♕a6 ♗c6
27 ♗xc6 ♔xc6

27...♕xc6 28 ♖h7 ♕d7 29 ♕c4 ♖f8 30 ♕d5 leaves Black tied up; White will proceed by advancing his kingside pawns.

28 a4!?

Despite squandering a part of his advantage, White is still clearly on top. He has a better pawn-structure, more active pieces and a safer king, all very important factors in a major-piece endgame. Opening a second front on the queenside is thematic, but White had other ways to improve his position:

1) The rook endgame after 28 ♕c4 ♕e6 29 ♕xe6 fxe6 30 ♖h7 is unpleasant for Black. His pawns are vulnerable and White's plan to transfer his king to the g-file after f3 is not so easy to meet. However, Black is not fully devoid of counterplay and with his active queen White can force the exchange in even better circumstances.

2) 28 ♕a4+!?, with the idea of reaching the position from the note to Black's 27th move, is more promising. After 28...♔c7 (28...b5 29 ♕a6+ ♔c7 30 ♖h7 ♕g8 31 ♖h3 ♕e8 32 ♖f3 enters via f6 with the threat e5, as 32...f5 doesn't help due to 33 ♕a5+ and exf5) 29 ♕c4 White either accomplishes his aim (after 29...♕d7 30 ♖h7) or gains a tempo in the rook endgame after 29...♕e6 30 ♕xe6 fxe6 31 ♖h7+.

28 ... ♖d8

Black can't free himself by 28...d5 since after 29 exd5+ ♔xd5 30 ♕b7+ ♔d6 31 ♔d2! the rook effectively joins the attack against the wandering king. Also 28...♕e6, with ideas such as ...d5 or ...♕a2, doesn't change the overall assessment after 29 ♖h7! (29 a5 is unconvincing due to 29...♕a2 30 ♖h7 ♖b8!? 31 ♕xa7 ♖b7) 29...♕a2 (29...d5 30 a5! and 29...♕f6 30 f3 are no improvement for Black) 30 ♔d2, disarming the queen sortie; now 30...♖f8 just loses a pawn for nothing after 31 b3 ♕a1 32 ♕c4.

29 a5 ♖d7

29...♕e7 with the idea of meeting 30 b4 (30 ♖h7 d5 31 f3 is not so impressive, although it retains some pull) with 30...♕b7 leads after 31 b5+! (31 ♕c4 d5 achieves little for White) 31...♔c7 32 ♕xb7+ ♔xb7 33 a6+ ♔c7 34 ♖h7 and f4 to an extremely cramped position for Black. He must always guard f7 and a7 and has little to say against White's kingside expansion.

30 axb6

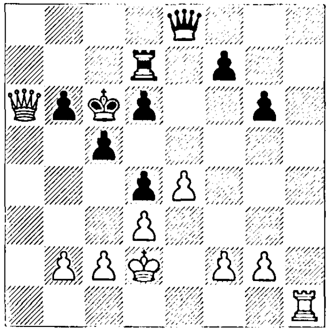
Again Shirov indicates the strong 30 b4!?:

1) 30...♕b8 loses on the spot to 31 ♖h8! ♕b7 32 b5+ ♔c7 33 ♕xb7+ ♔xb7 34 a6+ ♔c7 35 ♖a8.

2) 30...cxb4 31 ♕c4+ ♔b7 32 a6+ ♔b8 33 ♕c6, followed by ♖h8, leads to a hopeless queen endgame for Black.

3) Relatively best is 30...♖b7 31 axb6 (premature is 31 bxc5 dxc5, but 31 ♕c4!? is an equivalent alternative, when 31...♕e6 32 b5+ ♔d7 33 a6 is similar to the note to Black's 29th move) 31...axb6 32 ♕a4+ b5 33 ♕a6+ ♔c7 (33...♖b6 is worse due to 34 ♕a2) 34 ♖h7 and the siege continues.

30 ... axb6
31 ♔d2! *(D)*



This brings the king closer to the kingside and also clears the first rank to enable quick transfers from one flank to another.

31 ... ♕b8
32 ♖h7 ♔c7?!

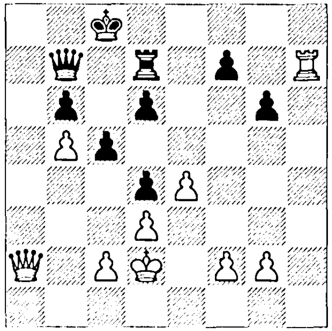
An important moment. Now White increases his space advantage and his pressure gradually becomes irresistible. 32...♕b7 33 ♕a2 (after 33 ♕xb7+ ♖xb7 Black is not as helpless as in the rook endgame above; e.g., 34 f4 b5 35 b3 ♖e7 35 g4 c4) and now 33...b5 or even 33...d5!? 34 e5 f6 35 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 36 exf6 ♔e6 offered Black more chances for survival.

33 b4 ♕b7
34 ♕a2 ♔c8

The only move. Black loses immediately after 34...♔b8? 35 ♖h8+ ♔c7 36 ♖a8 ♕c6 37 ♕a6 or 34...♔c6? 35 ♕d5+ ♔c7 (35...♔b5 36 ♕c4+ is the same) 36 ♕xf7!.

35 b5! *(D)*

B



White starts working with zugzwang motifs; Black is running out of plausible moves.

35 ... d5

Tougher is 35...♔d8 (a move like 35...g5? only creates further weaknesses after 36 ♖g7) and now:

1) 36 ♖h8+ ♔e7 37 f4 d5! (37...♖d8? 38 ♕xf7+!) 38 e5 ♖d8 39 ♖xd8 ♔xd8 40 ♕a6 ♕b8 with a defensible position for Black.

2) Tightening the screws with 36 f4! is stronger: 36...d5 (36...♕a7 37 ♖h8+ ♔e7 38 ♕d5! and the counterattack comes too late; White escapes the checks and mates after 38...♕a5+ 39 ♔e2 ♕c3 40 ♕g5+ f6 41 ♕xg6 ♕xc2+ 42 ♔f3 ♕xd3+ 43 ♔g4) 37 e5 ♔e7 38 ♕a1 and again Black lacks tempi to free himself: 38...♕a7 39 ♕h1 ♕a5+ 40 ♔e2 ♔d8 41 ♕h6! ♕xb5 (41...♕c3 42 ♕f8+ ♔c7 43 ♖h8! ♕xc2+ 44 ♔f3 ♕xd3+ 45 ♔g4 and the king hides) 42 ♕f8+ ♔c7 43 ♖xf7 and as Black must respect the threat ♕d6+, White simplifies into an easily won queen endgame.

36 ♖h8+ ♖d8?!

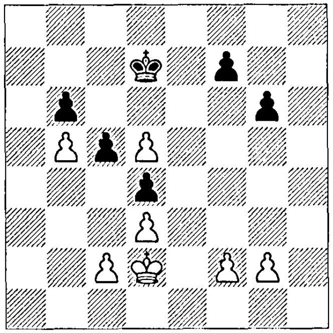
This is the final error after a protracted defence; White's win in the pawn endgame is elementary. Still, one can hardly reproach Lautier too harshly, because even after the necessary 36...♔c7 37 e5! (the immediate 37 ♖a8 allows 37...♔d6) 37...♖d8 38 ♖h7 ♖d7 39 ♕a1!, Black can't prevent the decisive penetration of White's queen via the h-file, as in note '2' to Black's 35th move.

37 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8

38 ♕xd5+ ♕xd5

39 exd5 ♔d7 *(D)*

W



40 c4 dxc3+

Black can't keep the position closed even after 40...♔d6 41 ♔e2 f5 42 f4, when White's king penetrates via h4. 40...g5 41 ♔e2 f5 42 ♔f3 ♔d6 43 g4 doesn't help Black either.

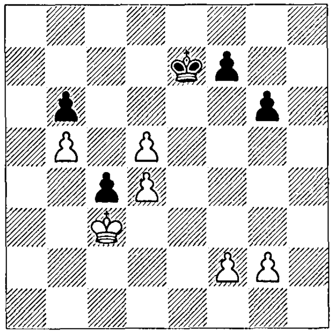
41 ♔xc3 ♔e7

42 d4

42 ♔c4 followed by d4 also wins.

42 ... c4 *(D)*

W



43 d6+

This pawn sacrifice is sooner or later necessary, but White could also have won with 43 ♔xc4 ♔d6 44 g3 f5 45 f3 g5 (45...♔d7 46 d6! ♔xd6 47 d5 ♔e5 48 f4+ ♔f6! 49 d6! ♔e6 50 d7 ♔xd7 51 ♔d5 is also winning for White) 46 ♔c3 ♔xd5 47 ♔d3 g4 (47...♔d6 48 g4 fxg4 49 fxg4 ♔d5 50 ♔e3 is similar) 48 fxg4 fxg4 49 ♔e3 ♔c4 50 ♔e4 ♔xb5 51 d5 and White's pawn queens first.

43 ... ♔xd6

44 ♔xc4 ♔e6

45 d5+ ♔e7

45...♔d6 46 ♔d4 f6 47 f4 ♔d7 48 g4 or 45...♔e5 46 f4+! ♔d6 47 ♔d4 leads to the same position.

46 ♔d4 f6

47 f4 ♔d7

48 g4 ♔d6

49 ♔c4

White avoids the last pitfall: 49 g5?? f5 with a full blockade.

49 ... ♔e7

50 g5 ♔f7

51 ♔d4 1-0

After 51...♔e7 52 gxf6+ ♔xf6 53 ♔e4 the road for White's king via e5 is finally open.

Summary

Black avoided the complications of an Open Sicilian by 3...e5!?; the weaknesses created by this committal move were well masked by the closed nature of the position. On the other hand, compared with a similar set-up against the Closed Sicilian, White's bishop here occupied an active post on c4 and could hardly be called a bad piece. As both sides started to pursue their respective strategic aims as early as move 6, White had a slender but rather durable edge. Black's main task in the opening was to keep the position closed and try to catch up with his development. In this respect 12...♘g4?! was a mistake, as it wasted precious time and handed over the only open file. After this another error was more than Black's position could stand; 21...♗d7? enabled White to pry open the centre by 23 c3!? and especially 25 b4! with great effect.

Despite missing these promising opportunities Shirov remained firmly in the driver's seat; the pluses enumerated in the note to 28 a4!? were permanent. Black's pawn-structure was not so bad in itself, but it lacked flexibility, since any move such as ...d5 or ...f5 would emphasize White's kingside superiority. White continued to apply pressure, avoiding piece exchanges for the time being and quietly improving his position. After Black omitted 32...♕b7 White squashed him even more by 35 b5!. Finally the main plus of a space advantage showed – better communication between the flanks (31 ♔d2!) made it impossible for the defender to prevent a decisive invasion. Lautier's 36...♖d8?! only shortened his suffering.

Game 37

Loek van Wely – Alexander Morozevich

Olympiad, Elista 1998

Queen's Gambit Declined, Slav Defence [D17]

1 d4 d5

2 c4 c6

3 ♘c3 ♘f6

4 ♘f3 dxc4

5 a4 ♗f5

6 ♘e5 ♘bd7

For the popular piece sacrifice line 6...e6 7 f3 ♗b4 8 e4 ♗xe4 see Game 26. Morozevich plays the older continuation, which he has successfully taken up during his meteoric rise to the world elite.

7 ♘xc4 ♕c7

The most common move, but it's not very clear how White should gain an advantage after the viable but less topical alternative 7...♘b6!? 8 ♘e5 e6 9 f3 ♘fd7. Black's position is slightly passive, but solid and resistant against violent action. 10 a5 ♘xe5 11 axb6 ♘d7 12 e4 ♗g6 13 xa7 (13 ♖xa7 ♘xb6 14 ♖xb7?! ♖a1! is very risky for White, as he is behind in development) 13...♕b6 14 ♗e2 ♖xa7 15 ♖xa7 ♕xa7 16 ♗e3 5 17 0-0 exd4 18 ♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 19 ♕xd4 ♗c5 20 ♕xc5 ♘xc5 21 b4 ♘d7 22 f4 f6 23 ♖a1 ♔e7 24 ♔f2 ♔d6 led to approximate equality in ket-Kobaliya, Elista OL 1998.

8 g3 e5

9 dxe5 ♘xe5

10 ♗f4 ♘fd7

This variation was thoroughly tested by Alekhine and Euwe in their world title matches, while another former champion who played it with both colours was Capablanca. In the early 1930s Black often tried 10...♖d8 11 ♕c1 ♗d6 11...♘fd7? loses to 12 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 13 ♕f4! ♗d6 14 ♕xf5 ♘xc4 15 ♕e4+ ♘e5 16 f4) 12 xd6+ ♕xd6 13 ♗g2 a5!? 14 0-0, but gradually practice has shown that the bishop-pair in an open position gives White at least a pleasant and lasting initiative.

11 ♗g2

Other attempts are less promising:

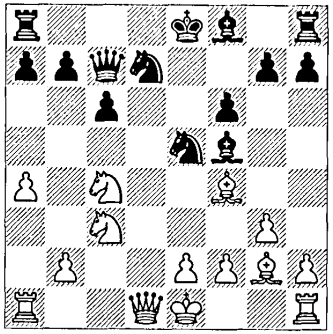
1) Aggression without development backfires on White: 11 ♕d4?! f6 12 ♖d1 ♗c5 13 ♘d6+ ♔f8 14 ♕d2 ♘d3+! and Black is better.

2) 11 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 12 ♕d4 (12 a5 ♕e7! forces 13 ♗xe5 ♕xe5, when Black has little to fear, Beliavsky-Atalik, Yugoslav Cht 1998) 12...f6 and now after 13 a5?! a6 14 ♗g2 ♖d8! 15 ♕a4 ♗c5 16 0-0 ♖d4 17 ♕a2 ♕e7 18 ♖ac1 ♖b4 19 b3 ♗e6 20 ♘c4 ♗a7 White's weak queenside was already causing him serious problems in Iskusnykh-Morozevich, Russian Ch (St Petersburg) 1998. Even after the more circumspect 13 ♗g2 a5!? he can't hope for an opening advantage.

11 ... f6 *(D)*

Subsequently Morozevich came up with the even more remarkable 11...g5!? against Kasparov in Wijk aan Zee 2000. Although his loss couldn't be ascribed solely to this move, later in his game from the same event with Anand he returned to the text-move.

W



12 0-0

This natural move is not White's only possibility:

1) In 1998 Van Wely had already been successful with 12 ♘xe5, but 12...fxe5 13 ♗g5 ♘c5! 14 0-0 a5!? transposes to the game Tunik-Morozevich, Krasnodar 1997, where Black got the upper hand after the passive 15 ♔h1? ♗e7 16 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 17 ♖a3 0-0.

2) 12 ♕c1!? is more interesting: White's queen aims for e3 to take the sting out of ...♘c5. After 12...♗e6 13 ♘xe5 fxe5 14 ♗e3 ♘c5 15 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 16 0-0 0-0 17 ♘e4 ♗e7 18 a5! White was slightly better in Eingorn-Volzhin, Graz 1999.

12 ... ♘c5

This is Morozevich's own idea, which since its introduction about a year earlier had brought Black astounding success. The whole risky concept is typical for modern chess – Black seeks activity and wants to create direct threats even before he ends his development. However, from this game onwards White started to get the grip of 12...♘c5 and the current verdict is that Black has problems. The same goes for the older moves:

1) After 12...♗e6 13 ♘xe5 fxe5 the nuance 14 ♗g5! h6 15 ♗e3 ♗c5 16 ♕c2! gives White a sizeable advantage, as both 16...0-0? 17 ♗xh6 and 16...♗xe3? 17 ♘b5! ♕b6 18 ♕g6+ are unplayable for Black.

2) The drawbacks of 12...♖d8 are well-known: 13 ♕c1 ♗e6 14 ♘e4! ♗b4 15 a5 0-0 16 a6 bxa6?! 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 ♘c5 ♗xc5 19 ♕xc5 g5 20 ♗e3 and White is clearly better, Euwe-Alekhine, The Hague Wch (1) 1937.

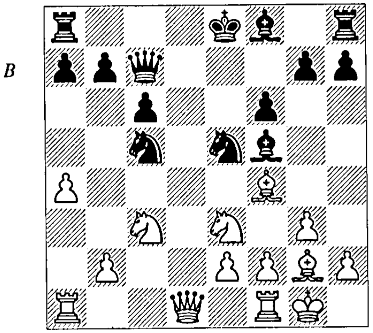
13 ♘e3! *(D)*

The newest and most dangerous attempt. The main alternative, 13 e4 ♗g6, has failed to bring White an edge:

1) Black is well prepared for the direct 14 ♗xe5?! fxe5 15 f4 ♖d8, and now 16 ♕g4 exf4 17 gxf4 ♘d3 or 16 ♕e2 ♘b3! 17 ♖ad1 ♗c5+ 18 ♔h1 ♘d4.

2) The sounder 14 ♕e2 ♘b3 (14...♗e7!? is also playable) 15 ♖ad1 ♗c5 16 ♗e3 ♗f7 17 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 18 f4 ♕e7 19 ♗h3 0-0 20 ♖d7 ♗xe3+ 21 ♕xe3 ♕c5 22 ♖e1 ♖ab8 23 e5 fxe5 24 fxe5 was played in Se.Ivanov-V.Popov, St Petersburg Ch 1998. Now 24...♖be8! gives Black equality.

13 ... ♗g6



After 13...♖d8 14 ♘cd5! ♕d7 15 ♘xf5 (15 b4!?) 15...♕xf5 16 ♘e3 ♕e6 17 ♕c2 Black has problems finishing his development, because 17...♘b3 18 ♖ad1 ♘d4 19 ♕e4 ♘xe2+? 20 ♔h1 only strands the knight.

Later Black came up with 13...♗e6 14 b4 ♖d8 but still couldn't equalize after 15 ♕b1!? (even clearer than 15 ♕c2 ♘a6 16 b5 ♘b4 17 ♕e4 ♗c5 18 ♖ad1 0-0 19 ♘c4 ♖xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♗d5 21 ♘xd5 cxd5 22 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 23 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 24 e3 ♖d8 25 ♗xe5 fxe5 26 ♕e4 ♖d1+ 27 ♗f1 ♗e7 28 ♔g2, when White had enough for the exchange in the aforementioned encounter Anand-Morozevich, Wijk aan Zee 2000) 15...♘b3 16 ♘ed5 cxd5 17 ♕xb3 ♕c4 18 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 19 ♖fd1 ♗xb4 20 ♘xd5 in Hillarp Persson-Hector, York 1999.

14 b4 ♘e6

After 14...♖d8?! 15 ♘ed5 cxd5 16 bxc5 d4 17 ♘d5 Black's central bastions fall.

15 b5!

Consistent: with a lead in development White wants to open the position. 15 a5 a6 16 ♕a4 ♗d6!? 17 ♘ed5 ♕f7 allows Black to face the future more calmly.

15 ... ♖d8

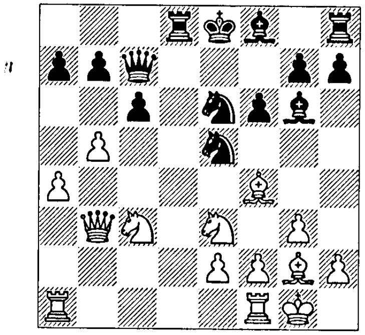
Black has no choice; 15...♘xf4? 16 gxf4 ♖d8 17 ♕c1 with the motif bxc6 and ♘b5 is unpalatable.

16 ♕b3 *(D)*

16 ♕c1 also provides some food for thought:

1) 16...♗d6 17 bxc6 bxc6 (17...♘xf4 18 gxf4 ♘xc6 19 ♘b5 is very dangerous for Black) 18 ♘e4 0-0 (18...♗e7!?) 19 ♘xd6 ♖xd6 20 ♗xe5 fxe5 21 ♘c4 ♘d4 22 ♕e3 isolates Black's pawns under more advantageous circumstances than in the game. White is better.

2) More active is 16...♗c5! 17 ♗xe5 (now 17 ♘e4 ♗d4 gets White nowhere) 17...fxe5 18 ♘c4 ♗f7, when Black's piece-play compensates for his split pawns; it's not easy to suggest a plausible plan for White.



16 ... ♗f7

After a series of natural moves this looks like a good moment to look for an improvement for Black. Bearing in mind the difficulties White will have later with controlling the d4-square, 16...♘d4 suggests itself, but after 17 ♕b2 (17 ♕a2 ♗b4 18 ♖fc1 ♗h5!? throws a spanner in the works, because the complications after 19 ♘cd5 ♕a5 work out well for Black) 17...♗c5 (17...♗d6?! is worse owing to 18 ♘cd5!) 18 ♗xe5!? fxe5 (18...♕xe5? 19 ♘c4 ♕e6 20 ♘a5 dismantles Black's queenside) 19 ♘e4 ♗b6 20 ♖ac1 (or even the immediate 20 ♘c4!?) White is better.

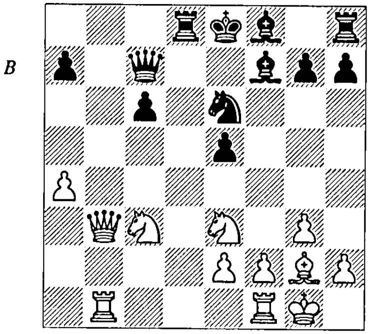
17 ♕b1?!

After this hesitant move White has to tread carefully. Van Wely wants to maintain the tension, but the immediate 17 ♗xe5! fxe5 18 bxc6 bxc6 is much stronger. Now one would hardly consider 19 ♕b1?!; White has better moves:

1) 19 ♕c2 ♗c5 (19...♘d4?! runs into 20 b5! ♘xc2 21 ♘xc7+ ♔d7 22 ♘xc2 ♔xc7 23 ♖fc1, when Black's kingside is still asleep) 20 ♘e4 ♗xe3 (20...♗b6 is worse due to 21 ♘c4 ♘d4 22 ♕a2) 21 fxe3 0-0 22 ♕c3. The doubled pawns control important central squares and White is somewhat better.

2) 19 ♖ab1! *(D)* is an even more energetic move.

White intends ♕b7. Black has three knight moves at his disposal:



2a) 19...♘f4 20 ♕b7 ♕xb7 21 ♖xb7 ♘xg2 22 ♔xg2 ♗c5 23 ♘f5 and Black's bishops are not long for this world. 23...0-0 (23...g6?! is even worse due to 24 ♘e4 ♗d5 25 ♘g7+ ♔f8 26 ♘e6+!) 24 ♘e7+ gives White a large advantage.

2b) 19...♘c5 20 ♕b4 ♘b3 (White quickly turns his attention to the kingside after 20...♗g6 21 ♖bd1 ♖c8 22 ♕g4) 21 ♕e4 ♘d4 22 ♘f5! ♗g6 23 g4 ♖c8 24 ♖fc1 ♗c5 25 ♖b7! ♕xb7 26 ♕xe5+ (Zontakh-Zhukova, Belgrade 2000) 26...♔d8 27 ♕xc5 gives White a powerful attack.

2c) 19...♘d4 20 ♕b7 ♗d6 21 ♕a6! (21 ♕xc7?! ♗xc7 22 ♖b7 ♗a5 is unclear) 21...0-0 22 ♘c4. We have already seen above how important this move is for White. After e3 he can contest the d4-square and has a permanent advantage.

17 ... ♗c5

17...♗d6?! is weaker in view of 18 ♘f5.

18 bxc6 bxc6

After the risky 18...♘xf4?! 19 gxf4 ♘xc6 20 ♘ed5 and ♕e4+ Black's king would have to do without castling.

19 ♗xe5 fxe5

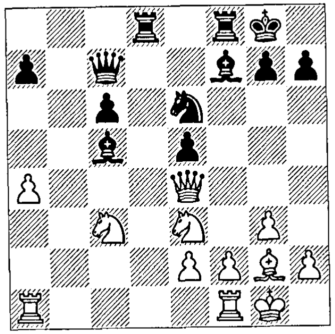
20 ♕e4

20 ♖c1?! allows the aggressive 20...♘d4!, while after 20 ♘e4 ♗d4 Black successfully manages to tuck his king away. In both cases White's position has become uncomfortable.

20 ... 0-0 *(D)*

Finally! Suddenly it's White who has problems with piece coordination, the main culprit being the unfortunate e3-knight, which gets in the way and has no satisfactory retreat.

21 ♕xc6!?



Van Wely decides to bail out by taking a slightly poisoned pawn. Other continuations allow Black to increase the pressure; e.g., 21 ♖ac1 ♘d4 22 ♘g4 ♖fe8! (threatening ...♗g6, and even stronger than winning the exchange by 22...♘b3 23 ♕xe5) or 21 ♘g4 ♗d4 22 ♖ac1 ♕a5!?.

21 ... ♕xc6
22 ♗xc6 ♘d4!?

Black could have won material with 22...♖c8 (after 22...♗xe3? 23 fxe3 ♖c8 24 ♘d5 White indirectly protects his c6-bishop) 23 ♗d7 ♗xe3 24 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 25 fxe3 (leaving the bishops alive with 25 ♘d5 ♗g5 or 25 ♘b5 ♗c5 is worse) 25...♖xc3 and now:

1) 26 ♖ab1 ♔f8 27 ♖b5 ♖c5 28 ♖b7 ♖c7 29 ♖b5 wins the e-pawn, but Black retains some winning chances after 29...e4 30 ♖e5 ♔e7 31 ♖xe4 ♖c2.

2) Wiser is the immediate exchange 26 ♖ac1!? ♖xc1 27 ♖xc1 ♗e8 28 ♖c8 ♔f8 29 ♖a8 ♘c5 30 a5 (30 ♖xa7 ♘xa4 is similar) 30...a6 31 ♖c8 ♘b7 32 ♖a8 ♘xa5 33 ♖xa6 ♘c4 34 ♔f2 (or 34 e4 ♗g6 35 ♖a4) and despite Black's minimal advantage a draw is the most probable result.

However, this was the last round, Russia were fighting for gold and so Morozevich decided to complicate matters instead.

23 ♗b5?

This is the worst retreat, which loses an exchange and puts White on the brink of defeat. The alternatives are:

1) 23 ♗d5?! ♘xe2+! 24 ♘xe2 ♗xd5 and now:

1a) After 25 ♖ac1 ♗xe3 26 fxe3 ♗f3 27 ♘c3 (27 ♘f4 is too passive: 27...♗g4 28 ♘g2 ♖xf1+ 29 ♔xf1 ♖d2) 27...♖d3! 28 e4 ♖d2 Black wins a pawn.

1b) 25 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 26 ♖ac1 ♗b6 27 ♖c2 ♖d3 and again Black has the advantage due to his better minor piece.

2) Better is 23 ♘e4 ♘xe2+ (23...♗b6? 24 ♗b5) 24 ♔g2 ♗d4 (24...♗xe3 25 fxe3 ♖c8 26 ♖xf7! fully equalizes) 25 ♖ae1 ♘c3 and although with his active bishops Black has a pleasant position, it's still nothing tangible.

3) The best emergency brake is 23 ♗e4!:

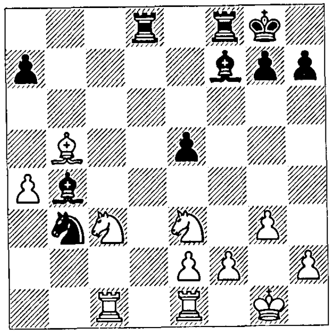
3a) Now 23...♘b3 24 ♖ad1 ♘d2 25 ♖fe1 ♗b3 (or 25...♗b4 26 ♘cd5!) 26 ♗d5+ gets Black nowhere.

3b) 23...♗b4 24 ♘cd5 (24 ♘ed5 is weaker due to 24...♘xe2+ 25 ♘xe2 ♗xd5) 24...♘xe2+ 25 ♔g2 ♗c5 26 ♖fe1 is a better version of line '2'; White has little to fear.

23 ... ♘b3!
24 ♖ad1 ♘d2
25 ♖fe1 ♗b4
26 ♖c1

After 26 ♘b1 ♘xb1 27 ♖xd8? ♗xe1 28 ♖d1 ♗xf2+ 29 ♔xf2 ♗b3+ White still ends up an exchange down.

26 ... ♘b3 *(D)*



27 ♘e4

White prefers to give up material immediately. The alternative was 27 ♖c2:

1) 27...♖c8 28 ♘cd5! (28 ♘ed1? ♘d4 ♖c1 ♗b3 and the cross-pins will cost White a piece after ...♗xd1) 28...♖xc2 (28...♗xe1? ♘e7+) 29 ♘xb4 ♖c7 30 ♘d3 e4 31 ♘e5 gives White more survival chances than in the game.

2) More accurate is 27...♗g6!? 28 ♖b1 ♗c4+ ♔h8 29 ♗xb3 ♗xc2 30 ♗xc2 ♗ gives White no time to achieve an effective light-square blockade; Black's next move will be ...♗d4 or ...♖d2) 28...♘d4 (28...♗xc2 is weaker due to 29 ♘xc2 ♗xc3 30 ♖xb3) 29 ♖xb4 ♘xc2 30 ♘xc2 ♗xc2, when Black's chances to convert his advantage into victory are very real.

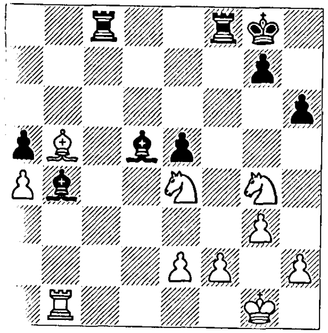
27 ... h6

Black prefers to keep his bishop and makes a useful preventive move, but 27...♗xe1 28 ♖xe1 ♘d4 (28...♘d2 is weaker due to 29 ♘c5) 29 ♗c4 ♗xc4 30 ♘xc4 ♖d5 was also possible, as Black's rooks can gradually invade White's mp.

28 ♖ed1

28 ♖cd1 ♗xe1 29 ♖xe1 is somewhat more silient – compare the previous note.

28 ... ♘xc1
29 ♖xc1 ♖c8
30 ♖b1 a5
31 ♘g4 ♗d5 *(D)*



32 f3?!

Following the disruption of White's pawn-ture, Black will be practically a whole exge up. 32 ♗d3 ♗c6! (32...♖ce8?! is worse ew of 33 ♖c1) 33 ♗c2 (after 33 ♘xe5 l, with the idea ...♗c2, the a-pawn will ly become dangerous) 33...♖fe8 34 ♘e3 s White more chances. However, even this nuation doesn't solve White's main prob- he can't liquidate the queenside and his n will always remain a target.

32 ... ♗xe4
33 fxe4 ♗c5+
34 ♔g2 ♗d4
35 h4

35 e3? ♖c2+ 36 ♔h3 ♗c3 only exposes White's second rank for an attack against h2.

35 ... ♖c3!

Black plans an exchange of rooks to lessen White's chances for counterplay. The tempting 35...h5 gets him nowhere after 36 ♘h2 ♖f2+ 37 ♔h3 and ♘f3.

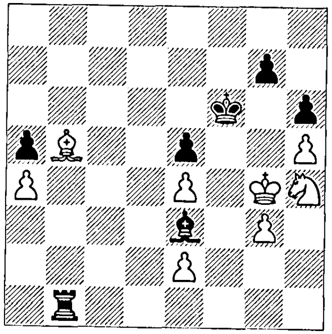
36 h5 ♖fc8
37 ♘h2 ♖c1
38 ♖xc1

38 ♖b3 ♖8c3 is similar.

38 ... ♖xc1
39 ♘f3 ♔f7
40 ♔h3 ♔f6
41 ♔g4 ♗e3
42 ♘h4

White has built a semblance of a fortress: his bishop protects a4 and e2 and a direct king-march to the queenside would leave Black's g7-pawn vulnerable against a possible counter-attack. However, Black finds a simpler way to break through.

42 ... ♖b1! *(D)*



The rook personally threatens to take care of the defensive bishop.

43 ♗c6

43 ♘f5 loses immediately to 43...♗c5 44 ♔f3 ♖b3+! 45 e3 ♖xb5 46 axb5 a4.

43 ... ♖b6
44 ♗d5

The bishop can't return any more.

44 ... ♖b4
45 ♗c6 ♗g5

...♖c4 requires preparation, as 45...♖c4 46 ♗b5 ♖xe4+? 47 ♔f3 is only a draw.

46 ♘f5

46 ♔f3?! ♖b3+ 47 ♔g4 ♗xh4 48 gxh4 ♖e3 would simplify Black's task.

46	...	♖c4
47	♗b5	♖xe4+
48	♔f3	♖b4
49	♘d6	♔e6
50	♘c4	♗d8
51	♔e4	♗c7
52	g4	♗d8

White is in zugzwang and must give way.

53	♔d3	♔d5!
54	e4+	♔e6

By forcing White to play e4, Black has further weakened White's position. It is now impossible for him to guard all the weak pawns on the fourth rank and the access roads to them. Morozevich prepares a decisive king invasion.

55	♔c3	♖b1
56	♗a6	♗c7
57	♘e3	

The bishop simply can't cope; after 57 ♗c8+ ♔f6 58 ♗f5 ♖b4 59 ♗d7 ♔g5 60 ♔d3 ♔f4 White is again in zugzwang – 61 ♘d2? ♖d4+.

57	...	♖c1+
58	♔d2	♖a1
59	♗c4+	

59 ♗b5 ♖g1 is similar; Black's king will enter via c5 or g5.

59	...	♔d6
60	♗b3	♔c5
61	♘f5	♖g1
62	♗d1	♗d8!
63	♘xg7	♗g5+
64	♔c2	♔b4

The game ends with a mating attack.

65	♘e6	♖g2+
66	♔b1	♔c3
67	♘c7	

Even 67 ♘xg5 hxg5 68 ♗f3 ♖f2 can't save the short-legged bishop.

67	...	♖g1
68	♘d5+	♔d2

0-1

Summary

Reviving older lines with new ideas can often bring very good practical results (see also Game 11). This is the case with Morozevich's 12...♘c5; Black strives for active piece-play and ambitiously pounces on the queenside weaknesses created by 5 a4. However, as the move had already been around for some time, Van Wely didn't come to the board empty-handed and produced an effective antidote: the tactically justified harassment of Black's exposed pieces (13 ♘e3!, 14 b4) enabled him to develop his own initiative with 15 b5!. As is often the case with pathfinders, he failed to achieve the full potential of his idea and profit from the temporary disharmony in Black's camp. The knight was misplaced on e3 and once White's attack lost momentum with 17 ♕b1?!, Black consolidated his basically sound position. The stronger 17 ♗xe5 crowned by 19 ♖ab1! is the product of subsequent analysis and practice.

After 20...0-0 Van Wely was quick enough to see that his initiative was over and sensibly aimed for a simplified and drawish endgame by 21 ♕xc6!?. Morozevich's reaction 22...♘d4!? led to a more complex struggle; apart from the subjective reasons mentioned in the notes above he correctly assessed that Black risked little even by keeping more pieces on the board. His choice was quickly vindicated by the tactical oversight 23 ♗b5?, and after White further compromised his position with 32 f3?! Black hauled in the point with meticulous precision (35...♖c3!, 42...♖b1!).

Game 38

Zbynek Hraček – Alexei Shirov

Match (game 3), Ostrava 1998

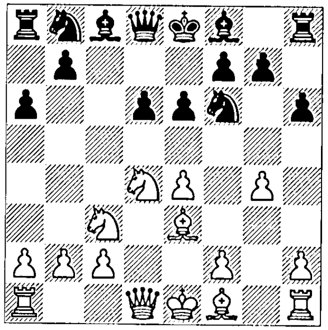
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf/Scheveningen Variation [B81]

1	e4	c5
2	♘f3	d6
3	d4	cxd4
4	♘xd4	♘f6
5	♘c3	e6
6	g4	h6

7	♗e3	a6 *(D)*

This position usually arises via the Najdorf move-order 5...a6 6 ♗e3 e6 7 g4 h6, although nowadays the main move 7...e5 has practically removed any other alternatives from circulation. Here this continuation is practically untested, although its consequences after 7...e5 8 ♗b5+ ♗d7 9 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 10 ♘f5 g6 11 ♘xh6 ♗xh6 12 ♗xh6 ♘xg4 13 ♗g5 f6 are not so clear. 7...♘c6 8 h3 often just transposes to the game.

W



8	♗g2	

It's interesting to trace the history of this popular line. In the early 1980s this position seldom arose and White usually played 8 ♖g1, in the spirit of the Keres Attack, or the more extravagant 8 ♕f3!?. The English Attack with 8 f3 became popular later and is highly topical even now, as both Topalov-Kasparov, Linares 1999 (Game 40) and Anand-Khalifman, Shenyang FIDE World Cup 2000 (Game 50) show.

However, at the time our game was played, White was looking for other suitable alternatives to 8 f4, which featured prominently in Topalov's sensational win against Kasparov at the Moscow Olympiad in 1994. The boom lasted until 1998, when Kasparov himself came up with 8...e5 9 ♘f5 h5! 10 gxh5 (even subsequent attempts to improve White's play failed to impress; e.g., 10 g5 ♘xe4 11 ♘xe4 ♗xf5 12 ♗g2 ♘c6 13 0-0 ♕d7 14 fxe5 ♘xe5 15 ♗f4 ♗e7 16 ♘xd6+ ♗xd6 17 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7! 19 ♖xf5 f6 20 ♗xb7 ♖a7 21 ♗d5 ♗xb2 is only equal, Leko-Shirov, Polanica Zdroj 1998) 10...exf4 11 ♗xf4 ♘xh5 12 ♘xd6+ ♗xd6 13 ♗xd6 ♕h4+ 14 ♔d2 ♕g5+ 15 ♔e1 ♕h4+ with a perpetual, Shirov-Kasparov, Linares 1998.

The immediate 8 h3 is somewhat passive, as it allows 8...b5! 9 ♗g2 ♗b7 10 a3 ♘bd7 11 ♘de2 g5!? 12 f4 gxf4 13 ♘xf4 ♖c8 14 0-0 ♖c4 15 ♕e1 ♘e5 16 ♘d3 ♘fd7 17 ♖d1 ♗e7 18 ♘f4 ♘f6 with balanced play, Sax-Stević, Bosnian Cht (Bihac) 1999. On the other hand, 8 h4 e5 9 ♘f5 g6 isn't ideal for White either, since with the extra moves h4 and ...h6 White doesn't have 10 g5. Therefore Hraček continues his development.

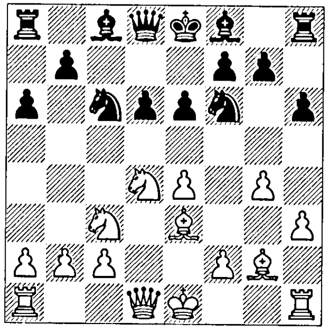
8	...	♘c6

This is the standard continuation. 8...e5?! is extremely risky: 9 ♘f5 g6 (after the inconsistent 9...♗e6 10 ♕e2 ♘bd7 11 0-0-0 ♕c7 12 h3 White is simply better) 10 ♕e2! gxf5 11 exf5 ♖g8 12 h3 ♗d7 13 ♗xb7 ♗c6 14 ♗xa8 ♗xa8 15 ♖g1 ♕a5 16 0-0-0 ♘bd7 17 f4 ♘d5 18 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 19 a3 ♗c6 20 ♕c4 ♕b5 21 ♕c3 with a raging attack for White, Bologan-Novgorodsky, St Petersburg Chigorin mem 1996; e.g., 21...♘f6 22 fxe5 ♘d5 23 ♖xd5! ♕xd5 24 ♖d1.

9	h3 *(D)*	

White is also not interested in winning material; after 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘xd5 cxd5 12 c4 dxe5 13 cxd5 ♗b4+ 14 ♔f1 0-0!? 15 a3 ♗d6 16 dxe6 ♗xe6 17 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 18 ♖g1 ♗c4+ 19 ♔e1 ♖d8 his trapped king would face hard times.

B



9	...	♘e5

Black ambitiously strives for piece-play, possibly combined with dark-square central control. He tries to derive some extra profit from his 6th move apart from its purely defensive aims. Not long before this game Shirov, with similar ideas on his mind, played the experimental 9...g5 10 ♘xc6! bxc6 11 e5 ♘d5 12 ♗d4 dxe5 13 ♗xe5 f6 14 ♘xd5 exd5 (Black's centre is shaky after 14...cxd5!? 15 ♗c3, but this seems preferable anyway) 15 ♗c3 ♕e7+ 16 ♔f1 ♗g7 17 ♕d2 ♗e6 18 ♖e1 ♕d7 19 f4 0-0 20 f5 ♗f7 in Z.Almasi-Shirov, Senec ECC 1998, but after 21 ♗d4!? Black's bishops would have made a rather sorry impression.

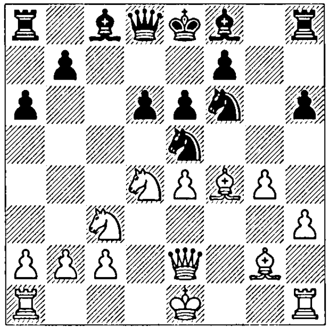
A more restrained approach is 9...♗d7 10 f4 (10 ♕e2 ♖c8 11 f4 ♕c7 is less flexible for White) 10...♖c8!? (less smart is 10...♕c7 11 ♕f3! ♘xd4 12 ♗xd4 e5 13 ♗e3 ♗c6 14 0-0-0 ♖c8 15 ♕f2 b5?! 16 ♘d5 ♗xd5 17 exd5 exf4 18 ♗b6! ♕b7 19 ♗d4 ♗e7 20 h4! ♘xg4 21 ♕xf4 ♕c7 22 ♗e4 ♘e5 23 ♗xe5 dxe5 24 ♕g4, when White's attack plays itself, Svidler-Akopian, Rostov 1993). Now 11 ♕f3 b5 is not too impressive for White, but Topalov's idea 11 0-0!? deserves attention. Although objectively the position is difficult to assess clearly, one feels that White's set-up is both flexible (placement of the queen; a choice between queenside and kingside castling) and threatening at the same time, as 6...h6 has made kingside castling a risky venture for Black. Thus the text-move occurs more often in practice.

10 ♕e2

10 f4 ♘c4 11 ♗c1 (11 ♕e2 ♘xb2! 12 0-0 was Votava-Stohl, Presov 1999; then 12...♕a5 13 ♘d1 ♘a4!? is good for Black) 11...e5 12 ♘f5 exf4 13 ♕e2 ♗e6 gives Black a lot of counterplay.

10 ... ♕c7

Now the double-edged 10...g5!? is more justified than above, although Black must tread carefully after 11 f4 gxf4 12 ♗xf4 *(D)*:



1) 12...♗d7 13 ♘f3 ♕c7 14 0-0-0 ♗e7 15 ♕f2 0-0-0 (15...♗c6 16 ♘xe5 dxe5 17 ♗e3 ♘d7 18 h4 ♗b4 19 ♖d3 ♗b5 20 ♘xb5 axb5 21 a3 ♗c5 22 ♖hd1 ♗xe3+ 23 ♕xe3 is also very dangerous for Black; his king stays trapped in the middle while White can activate his bishop via f1, Movsesian-Stocek, Czech Cht 1996/7) 16 ♘xe5 dxe5 17 ♗e3 ♖df8 (17...♗e8? loses immediately to 18 ♗b6 ♖xd1+ 19 ♖xd1 ♕c6 20 ♗d8!) 18 ♗b6 ♕c6 19 ♖d3 ♔b8 20 b3!?. White's knight is coming to a4 and Black will find it hard to disentangle himself. A possible but unforced line is 20...♗c8 21 ♘a4 ♘xe4 22 ♗a7+ ♔a8 23 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 24 ♘b6+ (24 ♖hd1? ♕f4+) 24...♔xa7 25 ♘xc8+ ♔b8 26 ♕a7+ ♔xc8 27 ♖c3+ ♔d7 28 ♖d1+ ♗d6 29 ♖xd6+! ♔xd6 30 ♕c5+ ♔d7 31 ♕c7+ ♔e8 32 ♕d6 ♕e1+ 33 ♔b2 ♕xc3+ 34 ♔xc3 with a large advantage for White.

2) Better is 12...♕c7!? 13 0-0-0 b5 14 ♕f2 ♘fd7 15 ♔b1 ♗b7 16 ♖he1 ♗e7 17 ♘ce2 0-0-0 18 ♗c1 ♘c5 with a playable position for Black, Shirov-Sax, Bundesliga 1992/3.

11 f4 ♘c4

12 0-0-0

After 12 ♗c1 the critical response is 12...e5!? (12...♗d7 13 b3 ♘b6 14 ♕d3 ♖c8 15 ♗b2 e5 16 ♘de2 ♗e7 17 0-0-0 ♗c6 18 ♔b1 ♘bd7 19 ♖hf1 ♘c5 20 ♕e3 0-0 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 ♘d5 gave White some edge in Leko-Sashikiran, Istanbul OL 2000) 13 ♘f5 (13 ♘d5 ♘xd5 14 exd5 ♗e7 15 ♘c6 ♗h4+! and White's king is vulnerable) 13...exf4 (13...g6 is weaker; White is better after 14 ♘e3) 14 ♘d5 (14 ♗xf4 ♘xb2 15 ♘d5 ♘xd5 16 exd5+ ♔d8 is also unconvincing for White) 14...♘xd5 15 exd5+ ♔d8!? (after 15...♘e5 16 ♗xf4 ♗xf5 17 gxf5 ♗e7 18 ♗xe5 dxe5 19 0-0-0 White's bishop is the superior minor piece) and although White's position appears very threatening, he has nothing concrete.

12 ... ♗d7

12...♘xe3 13 ♕xe3 is bad for Black, as he is too far behind in development and a central break is already looming.

13 ♔b1

A good illustration of Black's tactical possibilities is 13 ♗f2 e5 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♘f5? (15 ♘d5 is necessary) 15...♘xb2!, the idea being that 16 ♔xb2 ♗a3+! 17 ♔b3 ♕a5 18 ♘d6+ ♔f8 19 ♕c4 ♗e6 gives Black a winning attack. Therefore White creates room for his bishop.

13 ... ♖c8

Again 13...♘xe3?! 14 ♕xe3 0-0-0 15 e5 ♘e8 16 ♖hf1 doesn't solve Black's problems, as it's not easy for his pieces to get out of the cage since 16...♗e7?! runs into 17 ♘f5!.

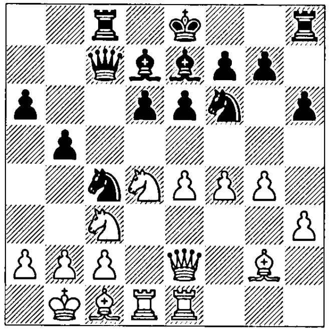
13...e5 is more to the point: 14 ♘b3 (14 ♘f5 g6 15 g5 hxg5 16 fxg5 ♘h5 17 ♘d5 ♕c6 18 ♗f3! is also interesting) 14...♖c8, but even here after 15 ♖d3 b5 16 g5 ♘xe3 (16...hxg5? 17 fxg5 ♘h5 18 ♘d5 ♕b7 19 ♗c1 ♗e6 20 ♕e1 ♗e7 21 ♗f3 ♗d8 22 ♗g4 gave White a substantial plus without any complications in Shirov-Gelfand, Monte Carlo Amber rpd 1999) 17 gxf6 exf4 18 ♘d4! White's lead in development gives him compensation and the initiative.

14 ♗c1 b5

Now the moment is less favourable for 14...e5?!, since after 15 ♘f5 exf4 16 ♘d5! ♘xd5 17 exd5+ ♘e5 18 ♗xf4 ♗xf5 19 gxf5 ♗e7 20 ♗xe5 dxe5 21 f6! ♗xf6 (21...gxf6 22 ♗e4 gives White a strong attack against the permanently exposed black king) 22 d6 ♕d7 23 ♗xb7! White is much better.

15 ♖he1 ♗e7 *(D)*

15...b4? is premature: 16 ♘d5 exd5 17 exd5+ ♔d8 18 ♘c6+ ♗xc6 19 dxc6 and after g5 White wins the piece back.



16 g5?!

We have reached the decisive moment of the game. Being 2-0 down in a six-game match, White throws caution and strategy to the winds and 'goes for it'. This is a psychologically understandable, but objectively faulty decision, as there were better moves:

1) 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 ♘h7 is not ideal for White either; his e5-pawn is vulnerable and any violent attempts are inconclusive:

1a) 18 b3 ♘a3+ (18...♗b4 19 ♘e4! ♘xe5 20 c3 ♗e7 21 ♗f4 looks risky for Black) 19 ♗xa3 ♗xa3 20 ♖d3 ♗b4 gets White nowhere, as after 21 ♘d5? exd5 22 e6 fxe6 23 ♘xe6 ♕xc2+! he stays a piece down.

1b) The typical Sicilian sacrifice 18 ♘f5 exf5 19 ♘d5 doesn't bring the desired result either:

1b1) Not 19...♕d8?! 20 gxf5, when both f6 and e6 in the air. After 20...♗xf5 21 ♘f6+ gxf6 22 exf6 ♗e6 (a cute line is 22...♕c7? 23 ♗c6+! ♔f8 24 ♗xh6+ ♔g8 25 ♕g2+ ♗g6 26 ♕xg6+! fxg6 27 ♗d5#) 23 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 24 ♕h5 White has a strong attack.

1b2) 19...♕c5! 20 b4 (this is forced, but now White's attack fails in many lines due to the weakened long dark-square diagonal) 20...♕a7 21 ♘f6+ gxf6 22 exf6 ♗e6 (variations such as 22...0-0 23 fxe7 ♖fe8 24 ♕d3 ♗c6 25 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 26 gxf5! show that although White's assault seems desperate, it's no joke; here the e7-pawn is still alive and an invasion via the open g-file is coming) 23 gxf5 (23 fxe7 fxg4! 24 ♗c6+ ♖xc6 25 ♖d8+ ♔xe7 26 ♖xh8 ♘f6 gives Black both a material advantage and an attack) 23...♗xf6 (23...♗xb4? 24 fxe6 ♘xf6 25 exf7+ is another way for Black to lose: 25...♔xf7 26 ♗d5+! or 25...♔f8 26 ♕e6 ♔g7 27 ♖g1 ♗c5 28 ♖df1) 24 fxe6 0-0! (24...♘g5? is bad in view of 25 exf7+ ♔xf7 26 h4!; Black must get his king to safety) 25 ♖d7 ♖c7 and now:

1b21) 26 exf7+ ♔h8 27 ♖xc7 ♕xc7 28 ♗xh6?! ♘a3+ 29 ♔c1 ♕c3! gives Black a mating attack.

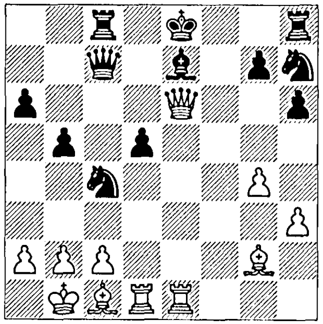
1b22) An incredible line is 26 ♕g4+ ♔h8! 27 e7 ♖xd7 28 e8♕ ♖d4!, when the board is too small for two queens! After 29 ♕g3 ♗h4 or 29 ♕gc8 ♖d8 White loses one of them, while 29 ♖e4 is also insufficient in view of 29...♘d6 or 29...♗e5!?.

1b23) 26 ♗xh6 ♖xd7!? 27 exd7 (27 ♕g4+ ♗g5 and now both 28 ♗xg5 ♕d4 and 28 exd7 ♕f2 29 ♗xg5 ♘a3+! 30 ♔a1 ♕xe1+ 31 ♗c1+ ♔h8 leave White a rook down) 27...♕xd7 28 ♗xf8 ♔xf8. The attack is over and Black should win.

1c) 18 ♘d5!? is more promising, but not enough for an advantage: 18...exd5 19 e6 (19

♗xd5 ♘f8 20 ♘f5 also deserves attention and is not without danger for Black) 19...fxe6 20 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 21 ♕xe6 *(D)*, and now:

B



1c1) 21...♔f8 22 ♗xd5 (also after 22 ♗f4!? the most prudent is 22...♘a3+) 22...♘a3+ 23 ♔a1 (the attempt to fight on with 23 bxa3 ♕xc2+ 24 ♔a1 ♗f6+ 25 ♖e5 ♗xe5+ 26 ♕xe5 is hardly worth the trouble; after 26...♕c3+ 27 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 28 ♗d2 ♖xh3 29 ♖e1! White has the initiative, but Black can play 26...♕xd1 27 ♕d6+ ♔e8 and if White spurns the perpetual with 28 ♗c6+ ♖xc6 29 ♕xd1 ♘f6, he can only be worse) 23...♘xc2+ 24 ♔b1 ♘a3+ 25 ♔a1 and the repetition is a logical outcome, as after 25...♗f6? 26 ♗b3 the threat ♗f4 is too strong; e.g., 26...♘g5 loses to 27 ♗xg5 hxg5 28 ♖f1!.

1c2) 21...♘f6!? 22 ♗xd5 (22 ♖xd5!? is for the adventurous types) 22...♘xd5 23 ♖xd5 ♖f8 24 ♗xh6! (after 24 ♕xa6 ♖f6 25 ♕xb5+ ♔f8 it's Black who is attacking) and Black should choose between giving (24...♘a3+) or allowing a perpetual by 24...gxh6 25 ♕g6+ ♖f7 26 ♕g8+.

2) White can fare better with 16 b3!? ♘b6 (16...♕a5 17 ♕d3! ♘a3+ 18 ♗xa3 ♕xa3 19 e5 and 16...b4 17 ♘d5! exd5 18 exd5 both indicate that Black's main problem is his king) 17 ♖d3 (not 17 ♗b2? b4 18 ♘d5 exd5 19 exd5 0-0!, when the e7-bishop is taboo) 17...b4 18 ♘d1. Now it's not easy for Black to find a suitable follow-up. 18...e5 (18...0-0 19 g5 and 18...g6 19 ♗b2!? e5 20 ♘f3 are both very risky for Black, to say the least) is consistent, but far from ideal for Black:

2a) 19 ♘f5 ♗xf5 20 exf5 (20 gxf5?! is worse since after 20...♘fd7 the g2-bishop stays hemmed in) 20...e4 21 ♖d2 d5 is not completely clear.

2b) 19 fxe5!? dxe5 20 ♘f5 ♗b5 (now 20...♗xf5 21 exf5 e4 fails to 22 ♗xe4! ♘xe4 23 ♖e3; White also has a substantial pull after 20...♗f8 21 c4! and ♘e3-d5) 21 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 22 ♘f5 and White's compensation for the exchange is overwhelming.

3) Perhaps the immediate 16 ♖d3! *(D)* is even stronger.

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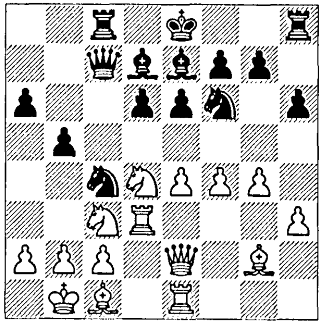

This has similar ideas as in line '2', and the tactical justification is that 16...b4 17 ♘d1 e5?! 18 ♘f5! ♗xf5 19 exf5 e4 fails to 20 ♗xe4! ♘xe4 21 ♕xe4 ♘a3+ 22 ♖xa3 bxa3 23 ♘e3 and ♘d5.

16 ... hxg5
17 fxg5 ♘h5
18 g6?

White burns his bridges – a move in the same spirit as 16 g5?!. The even wilder try 18 ♘f5? also gets White nowhere after 18...exf5 19 ♘d5 ♕d8 20 exf5 ♘e5, but 18 ♕f2 is better. After 18...b4 (18...♘a3+!?) 19 ♘ce2 ♘e5 Black has a pleasant position with his unassailable knight on e5, but the game is far from decided yet.

18 ... fxg6
19 ♗f3!?

After 19 ♕g4 ♘e5 20 ♘xe6 ♕c4 White just loses material for nothing. He instead tries a trickier piece sacrifice, as passive defence is utterly hopeless: 19 ♕d3 ♘e5 20 ♕e3 g5.

19 ... b4!?

Shirov accepts the challenge and is not content with the 'safe' advantage he could have secured with 19...♘e5.

20 ♗xh5

20 ♕g2 does not come the same thing, since Black can reply 20...bxc3:

1) 21 ♕xg6+ ♔d8 22 ♗xh5 cxb2 23 ♗xb2 (23 ♗g5 ♘a3+ 24 ♔xb2 ♕c3+ 25 ♔c1 ♕xc2+! is a motif which we will see much more of later) 23...♖b8 24 ♘b3 ♘xb2 25 ♔xb2 ♗e8 and Black wins.

2) 21 ♗xh5 cxb2! 22 ♗xg6+ ♔d8 23 ♗xb2 ♘xb2 24 ♔xb2 ♕c3+ 25 ♔b1 ♗f6 26 e5 ♖b8+ is also hopeless for White.

20 ... gxh5

After 20...♖xh5?!, 21 ♕g2 saves the knight.

21 ♕g2!

Strictly the only move. 21 b3 bxc3 22 bxc4 ♕xc4 23 ♕g2 0-0 offers White no chances whatsoever.

21 ... bxc3!

Very optimistic, but certainly consistent and objectively good enough to retain the advantage despite the ensuing lively complications. 21...♗f6? is weak in view of 22 ♕g6+ ♔f8 (22...♔d8 23 ♗g5!) 23 ♖f1! ♕d8 24 ♗g5 ♘e5 (24...♕e8? 25 ♖xf6+ gxf6? 26 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 27 ♖g1 mates) 25 ♗xf6 ♘xg6 26 ♗xd8+ ♔e8 27 ♗a5 bxc3 28 ♗xc3 with a clear advantage for White, as the d6-pawn is very vulnerable. However, I'm pretty sure that quite a few players would prefer the more sedate 21...0-0.

22 ♕xg7 ♖f8
23 ♗g5! *(D)*

This is best, since after 23 ♖f1 ♕b6 24 b3 ♘d2+! 25 ♗xd2 cxd2 White has no convincing follow-up and Black's king can flee via d8.

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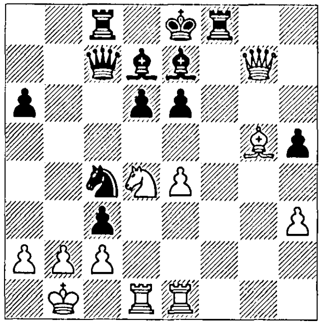


23 ... ♖f7?!

This is the first step onto a thorny path. Black can avoid the perpetual by 23...♗xg5! 24 ♕g6+ (24 ♕xg5? is weaker since it loses at once to 24...♕b6), and now:

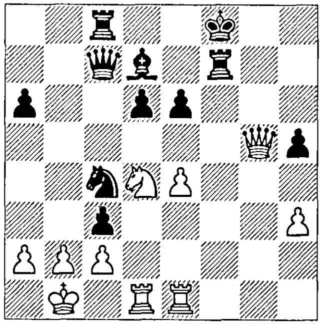
1) 24...♖f7 is rather the less practical option, as it gives White has the extra possibility 25 ♖f1 (25 ♕g8+ ♔e7 26 ♕xg5+ transposes to line '2b') 25...♗f6! (Black disrupts the coordination of White's forces by deflecting the rook to an attacked square; 25...♘e5? 26 ♕g8+ ♔e7 27 ♕xg5+ ♔f8 28 ♕xh5 guarantees White at least a draw) 26 ♖xf6 ♘e5 27 ♕xh5 ♕b6!? (the premature 27...♔e7? even loses: 28 ♖xf7+ ♘xf7 29 ♕h4+ ♔e8 30 ♖g1 ♔f8 31 ♖f1) 28 b3 ♔e7 29 ♖xf7+ (29 ♖h6 ♖g8 gets White nowhere) 29...♘xf7 30 ♕h4+ ♔e8! (after 30...♔f8 31 ♕h7 Black's king must return to e7) 31 ♖g1 ♔f8 32 ♕f6 ♕d8. Although Black should be able to consolidate gradually, he can avoid this line altogether.

2) The main move is 24...♔e7! 25 ♕xg5+ ♖f6, and now:

2a) Insufficient is 26 ♖f1 ♖cf8 27 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 28 e5 (28 ♖f1? loses to 28...♘d2+; White wants to open the d-file or deflect Black's knight) 28...dxe5 (28...♘xe5? 29 ♖f1) 29 ♕g7+ ♖f7 30 ♕g5+ ♔f8! (after 30...♔e8 31 ♕g8+ ♖f8 32 ♕g6+ Black's king can't go to d8 anyway) 31 ♘xe6+ (31 ♕h6+ ♔e8 32 ♘xe6 ♘a3+! mates) 31...♗xe6 32 ♖d8+ ♕xd8 33 ♕xd8+ ♔g7 34 ♕g5+ ♔h7! 35 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 36 ♕g5+ ♖g7 37 ♕d8+ ♔f7 38 ♕c7+ ♔g6 and Black wins, as his king finally hides from pursuit.

2b) Even trickier is 26 ♕g7+ ♖f7 27 ♕g5+ ♔f8 *(D)*:

W



2b1) 28 ♕h6+?! ♔e8 29 ♖g1 (we already know 29 ♘xe6? ♘a3+) 29...♕c5! (the only defence, by which Black frees an escape-route for his king; after 29...♘d2+? 30 ♖xd2 he must force White to give a perpetual with 30...♕b6!, as 30...cxd2? 31 ♖g8+ ♔e7 32 ♕g5+ ♖f6 33 ♖g7+ ♔e8 34 ♕xh5+ ♔d8 35 ♘xe6+!! mates: 35...♗xe6 36 ♕h8+ or 35...♖xe6 36 ♕h4+) 30 e5 (after 30 ♖g8+ ♔e7 31 ♘f5+ ♖xf5 32 ♖xc8 Black again has 32...♘a3+!) 30...♕xe5 31 ♖g8+ ♔e7 32 ♖xc8 ♘d2+! and Black wins large amounts of material.

2b2) Shirov shows that even after the relatively best 28 ♖g1 ♕c5 29 ♕g8+ ♔e7 30 ♕xf7+!? ♔xf7 31 ♖df1+ ♕f5! (not 31...♔e7?, squandering a half-point due to 32 ♖g7+, as 32...♔d8?? 33 ♘xe6+ mates) 32 exf5 ♘d2+ 33 ♔c1 e5 34 ♘e2 (weaker is 34 ♘e6 ♘xf1 35 ♖g7+ ♔f6 36 ♖xd7 cxb2+ 37 ♔xb2 ♘e3, while after 34 ♘f3 ♘xf1 35 ♘g5+ ♔e7 36 ♖xf1 cxb2+ 37 ♔xb2 ♖f8 Black wins the f-pawn and White's drawing chances are pretty low) 34...♘xf1 35 ♖xf1 ♗b5 36 ♖f2 ♗xe2 37 ♖xe2 ♔f6 White achieves only a disgusting rook endgame.

24 ♕g8+ ♗f8?

This move really is a serious mistake, and puts the outcome of the game in doubt. After 24...♖f8 25 ♕g6+ ♔d8 White can hardly avoid transposing to note '2' to Black's 23rd move by 26 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 27 ♕g5+, because 26 ♖f1 (26 ♕g7 ♖e8 27 ♗xe7+ ♖xe7 28 ♕g8+ ♗e8 29 ♘xe6+ ♖xe6 30 ♕xe6 ♘d2+ 31 ♔c1 cxb2+ 32 ♔xd2 ♕xc2+ 33 ♔e3 ♖c3+ gives Black a mating attack) 26...♖xf1 27 ♕g8+ (27 ♖xf1 loses to 27...♕b6 28 ♗xe7+ ♔c7) 27...♗e8 28 ♖xf1 (28 ♘xe6+ ♔d7 29 ♖xf1 ♕b7 30 b3 ♘a3+ is no improvement for White) 28...♕b6 29 ♗xe7+ ♔c7! only makes life easier for Black.

25 ♖f1 ♗c6

25...♘e5? 26 ♖xf7 ♘xf7 27 ♖f1 would please White greatly.

26 ♘xc6?

Now the counterattack triumphs. The alternatives were:

1) 26 ♘xe6? ♘a3+! 27 ♔c1 cxb2+ 28 ♔xb2 ♖b8+ 29 ♔c1 ♖b1+ 30 ♔d2 ♕a5+ and again Black comes first.

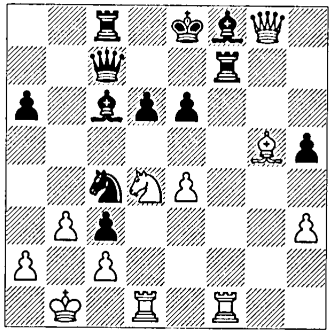
2) 26 ♕g6 is somewhat better, but also insufficient: 26...♕d7 27 ♖f6 (naïve is 27 ♘xe6? ♘e5) 27...♗g7! (after 27...♘d2+ 28 ♖xd2 cxd2 29 ♖xe6+ ♗e7 30 ♗xd2 the threat of ♗h6 is too strong) 28 ♖xe6+ (after 28 ♖df1 ♘d2+! 29 ♗xd2 cxd2 30 ♖xf7 d1♕+ Black retains the extra piece) 28...♔f8 29 ♖e7!? (29 ♘f5 runs into the typical 29...♘a3+, while after 29 ♗f6 the most convincing line is 29...♘d2+ 30 ♔c1 ♘xe4!?). After this desperate attempt Black must keep his calm:

2a) 29...♖xe7 30 ♗xe7+ ♕xe7 (30...♔g8? loses to 31 ♘f5 ♘a3+ 32 ♔c1 cxb2+ 33 ♔d2 and 30...♔xe7 drops the knight to 31 ♕xg7+ ♔d8 32 ♕g8+) 31 ♕f5+ ♕f7!? (after 31...♕f6 32 ♕xc8+ ♔f7 33 bxc3! Black doesn't have even a perpetual with 33...♘a3+ 34 ♔b2 ♘c4+ due to 35 ♔b3!) 32 ♕xc8+ ♗e8 33 ♘e6+ ♔e7 34 ♘xg7 (34 ♕c7+ is worse due to 34...♗d7!) 34...♘d2+ 35 ♔c1 ♕xg7 36 bxc3 ♗d7! 37 ♕xa6 ♘xe4 is hardly good enough for more than a draw.

2b) The above line indicates that the knight must move out of harm's way with 29...♘d2+! 30 ♔c1 ♖xe7 31 ♗xe7+ ♔xe7 32 ♕xg7+ ♔d8, when Black should convert his extra piece into victory.

3) Unquestionably the best continuation is the prophylactic 26 b3! *(D)*, which requires some tightrope walking by both sides:

B



3a) Misplacing the knight with 26...♘a3+? 27 ♔c1 ♕d7 28 ♕g6! e5 (28...♗b5 29 ♖f6 ♗g7 30 ♖xe6+ ♔f8 31 ♘f5 gives White a lethal attack) 29 ♘xc6 (29 ♘e6? ♗xe4!) 29...♖xc6 30 ♖f5 has fatal consequences: Black can't parry the threats ♖df1 and ♖xe5+!.

3b) 26...♗xe4? 27 ♘xe6 ♘d2+ 28 ♔c1! (for 28 ♗xd2 ♕e7 see line '3c2'; White can do even better than that) 28...♘xf1 (after 28...♕d7? 29 ♕xf8+ or 28...♕b7 29 ♘g7+! White mates, while 28...♖xf1 29 ♘xc7+ ♖xc7 30 ♖xf1 ♘xf1 31 ♕e6+ is also winning for White) 29 ♘xc7+ ♖cxc7 30 ♖xd6 and the attack will net White more material.

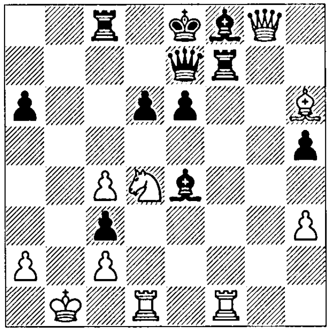
3c) Not much better is 26...♘d2+?! 27 ♗xd2, and now:

3c1) 27...cxd2? 28 ♘xe6! (after 28 ♘xc6 ♖xf1! 29 ♖xf1 d1♕+ 30 ♖xd1 ♕xc6 31 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 Black remains a piece up; it is largely academic how realistic White's drawing chances are) 28...♕e7 29 ♕g6! and suddenly Black has no effective defence against ♘g5.

3c2) Therefore 27...♗xe4 is necessary, but after 28 ♘xe6 (28 ♗xc3?! ♗h7 gives Black two active bishops and a pleasant endgame, while after 28 ♗h6 ♕e7 29 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 30 ♕xf8+ ♕xf8 31 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 32 ♘xe6+ ♔e7 33 ♖e1 ♔xe6 34 ♖xc4+ ♔f5!? White's weak back rank gives Black enough play to hold the game easily) 28...♕e7 29 ♕xf7+ (29 ♖xf7?! is unconvincing due to 29...♗xc2+! 30 ♔xc2 cxd2+) 29...♕xf7 30 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 31 ♘g5+ White has an extra pawn and very good chances to win the endgame.

3d) Shirov's recommendation 26...♕d7! is clearly best. Black protects the crucial e6-pawn and his knight is ready to go to e5 (to chase White's queen away from g6) or d2 according to circumstances. White must play 27 ♗h6 ♕e7 28 bxc4 (there is no repetition after 28 ♗g5?, since 28...♘d2+! 29 ♔c1 ♕d7 attacks the f1-rook and so Black gains a decisive tempo) 28...♗xe4 *(D)*, and now:

W



3d1) The plausible 29 ♖de1 ♗h7 (29...♖b8+ is still premature, as after 30 ♔a1 Black can't play 30...♗h7? 31 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 owing to 32 ♖xe6+! ♗e7 33 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 34 ♖xe7+) 30 ♕xf7+ (30 ♕h8? is weak due to 30...♔d7) 30...♕xf7 31 ♖xf7 (now 31 ♖xe6+ ♗e7 doesn't work for White) 31...♖b8+! 32 ♔a1 ♔xf7 33 ♖f1+ (33 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 34 ♖xe6 is no better due to 34...♖g8) 33...♔g8 34 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 35 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 36 ♘xe6+ ♔e7 leads to a bad endgame for White, since Black's pieces are far more active and White's weak pawns will soon start to fall. It is important that 37 ♘f4 h4 38 ♘g2? ♗xc2 39 ♘xh4 ♗e4 traps the unfortunate knight.

3d2) White should simplify immediately with 29 ♗xf8 ♕xf8 30 ♕xf8+ ♖xf8 31 ♖fe1! d5 32 ♘xe6 ♖f2 33 ♘g5 ♖xc4 34 ♖xd5 ♔f8. Although White's king is pinned down on the back rank, its black counterpart has a lot of problems escaping White's active forces and a draw is the most likely result after 35 ♖d8+ ♔g7 (35...♔e7 36 ♖d3) 36 ♘c6+ ♔h6 (36...♔h7 37 ♘g5+ ♔h6 38 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 39 ♖g1 ♖g2 40 ♖d6+ is an immediate draw) 37 ♖h8+ ♗h7 (37...♔g6 38 ♖g1+) 38 ♖g1 (38 a3!?) and the threat of ♘f8 forces Black's pieces back.

26 ... cxb2!

27 ♕g6

This is the best practical chance, since it creates some tactical pitfalls. Lines such as 27 ♗d8 ♖xf1 28 ♖xf1 (28 ♕xe6+ loses to 28...♕e7!) 28...♘d2+ 29 ♔xb2 ♕g7+ and 27 ♗e7 ♘d2+! 28 ♔xb2 ♖xf1 29 ♖xf1 ♘xf1 30 ♕xf8+ (30 ♗xf8 ♕f7) 30...♔d7 don't present Black any problems at all, while the endgame with the strong extra pawn on b2 after 27 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 28 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 is easily won for Black, as 29 ♘d8+ ♔g6 30 ♘xe6 ♖b8 31 ♖d3 ♖e8 32 ♘c7 ♖xe4 33 ♗d2 ♗g7 sees White lose outright.

27 ... ♘a3+

28 ♔xb2 ♕b7+!

The last subtlety: Black must keep an eye on f7. After 28...♕b6+? 29 ♔c1 ♕b1+ 30 ♔d2 ♕xc2+ 31 ♔e1 ♕c3+ 32 ♔e2 ♕c4+ 33 ♖d3 Black would even lose. After 33...e5 the prettiest is 34 ♘xe5! dxe5 35 ♖xf7 ♕xa2+ (35...♕xf7 36 ♕c6+! ♖xc6 37 ♖d8#) 36 ♖d2 ♕c4+ 37 ♔e1 ♘c2+ 38 ♖xc2 ♗b4+ 39 ♔f2 ♗c5+ 40 ♗e3 ♕xc2+ 41 ♔f3 ♕d1+ 42 ♔g2, when White is ready to interpose with check.

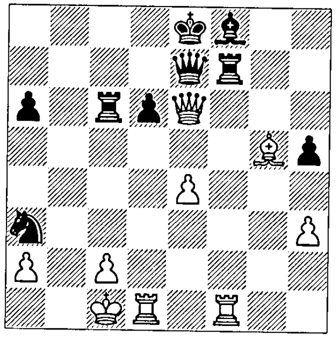
29 ♔c1

After 29 ♔xa3 d5+ 30 ♗e7 ♗xe7+ 31 ♘xe7 ♖c3+ Black forces mate.

29 ... ♖xc6

30 ♕xe6+ ♕e7! *(D)*

This study-like defence is also the only move, as after 30...♖e7?, 31 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 32 ♗xe7+ ♕xe7 33 ♖f1+ ♔e8 34 ♕g8+ ♔d7 35 ♖f7 turns the tables.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31 ♖xd6

White commits hara-kiri in time-trouble, but the mating threat costs him at least another piece anyway.

31 ... ♖xc2+
32 ♔d1 ♖xf1# (0-1)

Summary

In the Keres Attack White chose a restrained (7 ♗e3 instead of the more usual 7 h4), but topical and flexible approach. His subsequent moves were also characterized by straightforward development, while Shirov strove for concrete activity with 9...♘e5. A more consistent follow-up of this risky strategy would have been 10...g5!?; allowing central expansion with 11 f4 made the king feel uncomfortable on e8. However, the position after 15...♗e7 was not yet ripe for forceful solutions and White could have best profited from his lead in development by patient prophylaxis. 16 b3!? or 16 ♖d3! would both seriously hamper Black's queenside play and leave him struggling to cope with his main problems – finding a safe place for his king and activating the h8-rook.

After the premature 16 g5?! the control of e5 changed the positional balance in Black's favour and thwarted White's attacking ambitions, while the rook also gained scope on the h-file. Hraček realized this and tried to force the issue further with 18 g6? and 19 ♗f3!?. Although the former was objectively the losing move, White achieved his goal and set the board on fire, especially after Shirov somewhat imprudently accepted the piece sacrifice. The crisis approached fast and Black also erred with 23...♖f7?! and 24...♗f8?. Although it was difficult to foresee all the ramifications of the stronger 23...♗xg5!, here Black was definitely risking less, as he could always have bailed out by allowing White to give one of the numerous lurking perpetuals. In the game Hraček once again spurned necessary prophylaxis by omitting 26 b3!. 26 ♘xc6? was the final mistake that gave Black's counterattack a much-needed decisive weapon in the form of the b2-pawn.

Game 39

Garry Kasparov – Veselin Topalov

Wijk aan Zee 1999

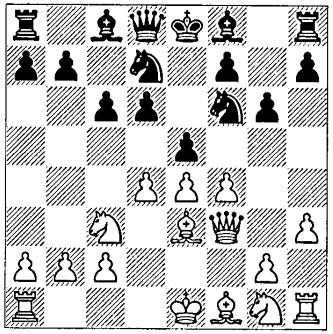
Pirc Defence [B07]

1 e4 d6
2 d4 ♘f6
3 ♘c3

It's no surprise that the somewhat passive Pirc occurs rarely in Kasparov's practice. Earlier he had tried 3 f3 a few times, but against Topalov, who is a King's Indian connoisseur himself, he avoids the Sämisch Variation (See Game 9).

3 ... g6
4 ♗e3 ♗g7

White has chosen a sharp line and Black must consider even such a natural developing move as the text-move with care. As one of White's plans is ♕d2 and ♗h6, capturing on h6 will now cost Black a tempo, while 'castling into it' would be playing with fire. 4...♘g4?! 5 ♗g5 is not ideal for Black either, as he loses rather than gains time. The alternative with the best reputation is 4...c6 but this is perhaps undeserved. After the flexible 5 h3! (after 5 ♕d2 ♘bd7 6 ♗d3 b5 7 ♘f3 e5 8 h3, 8...♗g7?! 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 a4! weakens Black's queenside, but the more circumspect 8...♗b7! is playable) White keeps his development options open and Black must seriously reckon with further central expansion. The most reasonable reply is 5...♘bd7 (5...b5?! 6 e5! ♘fd7 7 exd6 exd6 8 d5 is clearly better for White and 5...♗g7?! 6 f4! 0-0 7 ♘f3 transposes to a version of the Austrian Attack that is suspect for Black) 6 f4 e5 (6...b5, with the point 7 e5?! b4!, is interesting, but the stronger 7 a3 can transpose, via 7...e5 8 ♕f3, to the main line of this note; this was in fact the move-order used in Fogarasi-Burnett) 7 ♕f3 *(D)*.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White wants to play f5 after dxe5, when the resulting pawn-chain will further his kingside attacking ambitions and seriously cramp Black. This position is still quite rare in practice and it's not easy to pinpoint the most accurate reaction, as White's plan is quite flexible. After 7...b5 (7...♕a5 8 ♗d3 ♗g7 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 f5 and now 10...gxf5?! 11 ♕xf5! b5 12 ♘ge2 b4 13 ♘b1 ♘b6 14 ♕f2 ♘a4 15 0-0 ♗e6 16 b3 ♘b2 17 ♘g3 ♘xd3 18 cxd3 ♕b5 19 ♘d2 ♖d8 20 ♗g5 ♖g8 21 ♘f5 gave White a strong attack in Movsesian-Ftačnik, Hamburg 1997, while even the better 10...b5 11 ♘ge2 leaves Black's problems unsolved) 8 a3!? (8 0-0-0 b4 9 ♘ce2 ♕e7 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 f5 gxf5 12 ♕xf5 ♕e6!? and in the arising endgame Black will have enough counterplay against the weak e4-pawn) 8...♗b7 9 0-0-0 ♕e7 10 g4 h6 11 ♖h2! a5?! 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 g5 ♘h5 14 ♘xb5 cxb5 15 ♗xb5 ♗c8 16 ♖hd2 White whipped up a lethal attack seemingly out of nowhere in Fogarasi-Burnett, Budapest 2000.

5 ♕d2 c6
6 f3

In comparison with the text-move, 6 h3 doesn't help the possible kingside pawn-storm too much and Black can seriously contemplate even 6...0-0!? followed by ...e5. An ambitious try is the immediate 6 ♗h6!?, after which White can later develop his g1-knight to its natural square, or possibly even play f4 first. After 6...♗xh6 7 ♕xh6 Black can hold his own by changing the character of the game with 7...♕a5 8 ♗d3 c5!? (8...b5 9 ♘f3 b4 10 ♘e2 ♗a6 11 0-0 leaves Black with an unsolved king problem; on the other hand, 8...♘bd7 9 ♘f3 e5 10 0-0 exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♕h5 12 ♕d2 0-0 13 ♗e2 ♕e5 14 f4 leaves Black passive and gives White a pleasant space advantage, Adams-Nogueiras, Buenos Aires 1991) 9 ♘ge2 cxd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘c6!? (10...♕b6? 11 0-0-0 ♘c6 is unplayable owing to 12 ♘xc6 bxc6 13 e5! dxe5 14 ♘e4 ♗e6 15 ♕g7 0-0-0 16 ♘xf6 exf6 17 ♕xf6 ♖he8 18 ♖he1, when Black loses material, Jansa-H.Hoffmann, 2nd Bundesliga 1996/7) 11 ♘b3 ♕b6. The position strongly resembles a Sicilian; if Black can finish his development unmolested with ...♗e6 and ...0-0-0, he will be fine. The pseudo-active 12 ♘d5 ♘xd5 13 ♕g7?! (13 exd5 ♘b4!? is also OK for Black) 13...♖f8 14 exd5 ♘e5 15 0-0 h5! 16 ♔h1 ♗d7 17 f4 ♘g4 18 h3 ♘e3 19 ♖fe1 ♘xd5 20 ♗xg6 ♘xf4! 21 ♗xh5 ♘xh5 22 ♕g5 0-0-0 quickly gave Black a winning attack in Bunzmann-P.Nikolić, Bundesliga 1999/00.

6 ... b5
7 ♘ge2

White has a wide choice here. The older line 7 0-0-0 ♕a5 8 ♔b1 ♘bd7 9 ♗h6 ♗xh6 10 ♕xh6 ♘b6 11 ♘h3 ♗xh3! 12 ♕xh3 ♘a4! is not too promising for White and gives Black an excellent position. Normal development with 7 ♗d3 is also an option, but with the text-move Kasparov foresees a different and more active future for his light-squared bishop. However, by far the most popular continuation is the aggressive 7 g4!?, which leads to complicated play.

7 ... ♘bd7
8 ♗h6 ♗xh6
9 ♕xh6 ♗b7

Black's king heads for the queenside. This natural developing move is no worse than the more active attempts to gain immediate counterplay:

1) White is well prepared for 9...♕a5?! 10 ♘c1 ♕b6 11 ♘b3 a5 12 a4 b4 13 ♘d1 ♗a6 14 ♘e3 ♗xf1 15 ♖xf1 ♕a6 16 ♔f2! and White successfully castles by hand, whereas Black's problems with his king persist, Moroz-Janda, Dečin 1998.

2) 9...b4 10 ♘d1 c5 11 d5 ♕a5 is also not quite ideal, since after 12 ♘e3!? ♗a6 13 ♘c1 White's control of c4 gives him an edge.

3) More to the point is 9...e5 10 a3 (too soft is 10 dxe5?! dxe5 11 ♘c1 ♗b7 12 ♘d3 ♕e7 13 g3 0-0-0 14 b4 a5 15 a3 ♔c7 16 ♗e2 axb4 17 axb4 ♖a8 with easy equality, B.Kristensen-Cu.Hansen, Vejle 1994). Now transposing back to our game with 10...♗b7 is sensible, as investing time into forcing the central exchange and relieving the tension has its risks: 10...♕a5 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♘c1 ♗b7 13 ♘b3 ♕c7 (13...♕b6 14 a4! also gives White the initiative) 14 0-0-0 and 14...0-0-0? still fails to 15 ♗xb5!.

10 a3!?

Prudent prophylaxis. The impetuous 10 0-0-0? is met by 10...♕a5, forcing queenside concessions from White. After 10 ♘c1, 10...e5 11 dxe5 dxe5 12 ♘b3 a6 (12...a5!?) 13 0-0-0 ♕c7 14 ♕g7 ♖f8 (14...♖g8? loses on the spot to 15 ♖xd7) 15 g3 0-0-0 16 ♗h3 gave White strong pressure in Moroz-Yurasov, Ukrainian Cht (Simferopol) 1991. However, the knight manoeuvre seems rather heavy-handed before Black commits himself in the centre, and Black can postpone ...e5 with 10...♕c7 11 ♘b3 a6, which is quite solid. Kasparov wants to achieve a better version of Moroz-Yurasov by maintaining the central tension.

10 ... e5

As Black intends to castle long, he doesn't want to expose his queenside pawns even more and so refrains from 10...a5 11 ♘d1 b4 12 ♘c1!?. After axb4 White's knight comes to b3, he finishes his development and Black's king will most probably remain in the middle. Topalov challenges White's centre, but even here the patient 10...♕c7!?, followed by ...0-0-0, was a viable alternative. Black can even change his mind and prepare ...c5 with ...a6.

11 0-0-0 ♕e7

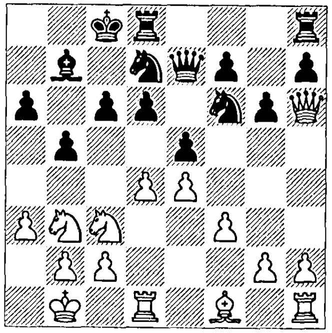
After 11...a6 12 ♔b1 (12 f4 ♘g4 13 ♕g7 ♕f6 gets White nowhere) 12...♕c7 Black covers a5 and 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 ♕g7 ♔e7 15 ♕h6 c5 is not clear. However, against Kasparov one understandably wants to get one's king to safety as soon as possible.

12 ♔b1 a6

The opening is practically over and both sides start realizing their respective plans. The violent 12...a5?! 13 ♘c1 b4 14 dxe5! ♘xe5 15 ♘a4 bxa3 16 b3 once again only weakens Black's position. Instead of the modest text-move, Topalov could have played 12...0-0-0 immediately. However, he would then not only have to worry about 13 d5!?, but also if White continues as in the game, the solidifying ...a6 would sooner or later be necessary.

13 ♘c1! 0-0-0

14 ♘b3 *(D)*



14 ... exd4!

A brave and unprejudiced decision. With the current pawn-structure White has more space and certainly more useful moves at his disposal (g3, ♗h3, ♘a5 and ♕e3, to name just a few). This would be especially marked after 14...c5?! 15 d5, when Black suffers without effective counterplay. Therefore Topalov opens the position and intends to compensate for his shaky king with active piece-play.

15 ♖xd4

The knight is already destined for a5...

15 ... c5

16 ♖d1 ♘b6

Black prepares ...d5. 16...♘e5 has the same idea but exposes the knight; then after 17 ♗e2, 17...d5? fails to 18 f4 and e5 with a large advantage for White.

17 g3

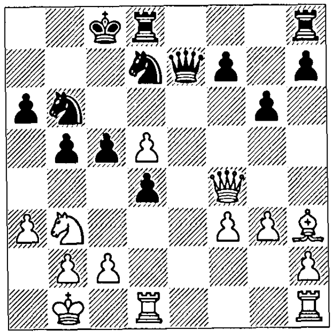
White needs more pieces in the fray. 17 a4 b4 18 a5 bxc3 19 axb6 ♘d7 20 ♕g7 cxb2 21 ♕xb2 ♘xb6 22 ♘a5 ♔c7 gives him less than nothing and 17 ♘a5 d5! (Black has no time for 17...♗a8?! in view of 18 a4) 18 ♘xb7 ♔xb7 19 ♘xd5 (19 exd5 might make Black even think about 19...b4!?) 19...♘bxd5 20 exd5 ♘xd5 (20...♖xd5!? 21 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 22 ♗d3 ♘f6 is also playable) 21 ♗d3 f5 isn't too promising for White either; e.g., 22 c4 ♘e3 23 ♗e4+ fxe4 24 ♕xe3 bxc4 25 fxe4 ♕e5 with simplification and sufficient counterplay.

17 ... ♔b8

Black decides to move his king out of the draught before he undertakes any central activity. In retrospect this sounds ironic, but his decision is correct. Instead, 17...d5?! is very risky:

1) 18 ♗h3+ ♔b8 19 exd5 (Black's king is safe after 19 ♕f4+ ♔a7, as 20 ♘xc5? ♘h5 21 ♕e3 d4! costs White a piece) 19...♘bxd5 20 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 (20...♖xd5 is less accurate due to 21 ♕f4+!?, when 21...♕e5 22 ♕xe5+ ♖xe5 23 ♖d6 leaves White better) is inconclusive, since Black's pieces are well centralized and White's activity gradually peters out after 21 ♘a5 ♗a8 22 c4 bxc4 (22...♘e3!?) 23 ♖he1 (or 23 ♘xc4 ♕e2) 23...♕f6.

2) More ambitious is 18 ♕f4!? d4 19 ♗h3+ ♘fd7 20 ♘d5! ♗xd5 (20...♘xd5 21 exd5 ♗xd5 22 ♖he1 causes trouble after 22...♕f8 23 ♕f6! or 22...♗e6 23 ♕e4) 21 exd5 *(D)* and now:



2a) 21...♘xd5 22 ♕e4! ♕xe4 (or 22...♕d6? 23 ♘xd4 cxd4 24 ♖xd4 and White wins at least a pawn) 23 fxe4 ♘e3 24 ♘xc5 ♘xd1 25 ♖xd1 f5 26 ♘e6 ♖de8 27 exf5 gives White two pawns for the exchange and good winning chances with his active forces.

2b) 21...f5 22 ♖he1 ♕f8 23 ♖e6 ♘xd5 24 ♕d2 and although now the h3-bishop is marooned, it can become a monster after f4 and ♗g2. Black's king is in grave danger without the protective bishop; e.g., 24...♘e3 25 ♕a5 ♘b8 26 ♕b6! ♘xd1 27 ♘xc5 ♕f7 28 ♘xa6 and the attack breaks through.

18 ♘a5

Kasparov already envisages the rich combinational possibilities resulting from his pieces hovering in the vicinity of Black's king. These will come to fruition in a particularly brilliant way, but we will see that Topalov could have saved the game later on by declining the first sacrifice. As from now on up to the tactical explosion the moves will be pretty much forced, this is the last chance to look for any alternatives. 18 ♗h3 d5 transposes to note '1' to Black's 17th move. 18 ♕f4 is more interesting, but after 18...♘h5! (after 18...♔a7, 19 ♗xb5 ♘h5 20 ♕h4! ♕xh4 21 gxh4 axb5 22 ♘xb5+ ♔b8 23 ♘xd6 f5 24 ♘xc5 ♗d5!? is not quite clear, but White has the patient 19 g4!?, when ♗xb5 is a threat and 19...d5? runs into 20 ♘xc5) 19 ♕e3 f5 Black gets central counterplay. 18 g4 looks strange (remember that White played 17 g3), but is in fact a playable attempt to apply the idea (19 g4!?) that we have just considered. 18 ♕e3!? seems more harmonious; by targeting c5 White prevents ...d5 and if he manages to finish development and double rooks on the d-file, he will have a distinct pull.

18 ... ♗a8

We have already seen above how important this bishop is.

19 ♗h3 d5

20 ♕f4+ ♔a7

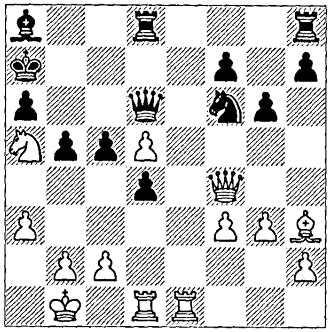
21 ♖he1 d4

Opening the position would be suicidal: after 21...dxe4 22 fxe4 Black has no good defence against ♘d5, while after 22...♘xe4 (22...♖xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♘xe4? 24 ♖d7+! mates) 23 ♘xe4 ♖xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 ♗xe4 25 ♖e1 ♖e8 26 ♖xe4! ♕xe4 27 ♕c7+ ♔a8 28 ♘c6 Black collapses.

22 ♘d5

One can hardly imagine Kasparov playing 22 ♘a2 ♖he8, when Black has little to fear.

22 ... ♘bxd5
23 exd5 ♕d6 *(D)*



24 ♖xd4!

The idea behind the whole operation naturally wasn't the naïve 24 ♕xd6? ♖xd6 25 b4 cxb4 26 axb4 ♘xd5 or 24 ♘c6+ ♗xc6 25 dxc6 ♕xf4 26 ♖e7+ ♔b6 27 gxf4 ♘d5!? 28 ♖xf7 ♖df8 – in both cases White is fighting for his life. Kasparov freely admits that at this tense moment he still didn't see a forced win if Black took the rook. The whole game continuation up to 37 ♖d7! flashed through his mind only during Topalov's 15-minute think. At the same time he realized Black was not forced to accept the gift.

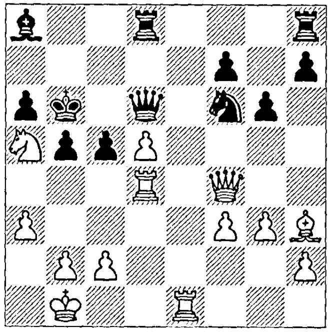
24 ... cxd4?

This is objectively bad, but millions of chess fans should be grateful to Topalov for his reckless courage, which meant that Kasparov's fantastic idea didn't have to remain behind the scenes. As White had no direct threat, there were alternatives to the text-move:

1) Weak is 24...♖he8? (24...♕xf4? is very feeble: 25 ♖xf4 ♖d6 26 c4 ♔b6 27 b4) 25 ♖xe8 ♘xe8 26 ♕xf7+! ♔b6 27 ♘c6 ♗xc6 28 dxc6 cxd4 (28...♕xd4 also loses, to 29 ♕b7+ ♔a5 30 c7) 29 ♕b7+ ♔c5 30 b4+ ♔c4 31 c7!? ♘xc7 32 ♕e4 and Black can stave off ♕d3# only at an enormous cost.

2) 24...♗xd5?! is somewhat better, but nevertheless not ideal: 25 ♖xd5! ♘xd5 (25...♕xf4 26 ♖xd8 and now 26...♕h6 27 ♖e7+ ♔b6 28 b4! mates, while 26...♕c7 27 ♖xh8 ♕xa5 28 ♖e7+ is just as hopeless for Black) 26 ♕xf7+ ♘c7 27 ♖e6 ♖d7! (after 27...♕d1+? 28 ♔a2 ♖d7 29 ♖e7 the attack breaks through) 28 ♖xd6 ♖xf7 29 ♘c6+ ♔a8 30 f4 and White has more than enough for the exchange.

3) 24...♔b6! *(D)* is decidedly the best move, which shifts the burden of proof onto White:



3a) 25 ♕d2?! and now:

3a1) The greedy 25...cxd4 26 ♕xd4+ ♕c5! (26...♔xa5 27 b4+ ♔a4 28 ♕e3 and now 28...♕xd5 29 ♕b6 or 28...♗xd5 29 ♔b2 and ♕b3+! mates; we'll see a lot of this motif yet) 27 ♕xf6+ ♕d6 28 ♕d4+ (after 28 ♕c3?! ♗xd5 the king escapes) leads only to a perpetual.

3a2) 25...♘xd5! is the problem. After 26 ♖d3 (the rook has no safe haven; 26 ♖h4 is met by 26...g5! and ...♘f6) 26...c4 27 ♖d4 c3! White loses material without compensation.

3b) 25 b4 ♕xf4 (25...♘xd5 26 ♕xd6+ ♖xd6 is also possible, and equal) 26 ♖xf4 ♘xd5 27 ♖xf7 cxb4 28 axb4 ♘xb4 29 ♘b3 is not too enticing for White after 29...♖he8 or especially Kasparov's 29...♖d6!?.

3c) The most prudent is 25 ♘b3, when the rook is still taboo:

3c1) 25...cxd4? (25...♘xd5? is not a great deal better: 26 ♕xf7 cxd4 27 ♖e6) loses nicely to 26 ♕xd4+ ♔c7 (26...♔b7 27 ♖e7+! ♕xe7 28 ♘a5+ ♔c7 29 d6+! mates) 27 ♕a7+ ♗b7 28 ♘c5 ♖b8 29 ♖e7+! ♕xe7 30 ♘xa6+.

3c2) However, the strong 25...♗xd5! forces a dour and equal endgame after 26 ♕xd6+ (26 ♖xd5?! doesn't work due to 26...♘xd5 27 ♕xf7 ♘c7) 26...♖xd6 27 ♖d2.

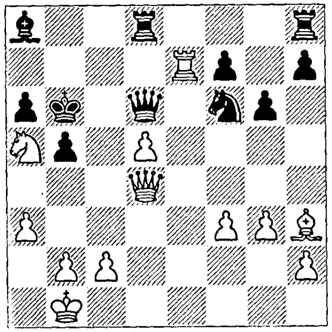
25 ♖e7+!!

This is the real point of the combination. 25 ♕xd4+? ♕b6! 26 ♖e7+ ♘d7 27 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 28 ♕xh8 ♖xd5 leads to the opposite result.

25 ... ♔b6

After 25...♕xe7? 26 ♕xd4+ ♔b8 27 ♕b6+ White mates directly, while Black also loses by force after 25...♔b8 26 ♕xd4 ♘d7 27 ♗xd7! (27 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 28 ♗xd7 ♖g8!? is good for White, but far less incisive) 27...♗xd5 28 c4! (28 ♘c6+? is weaker due to 28...♕xc6 29 ♗xc6 ♗a2+). Now ♘c6+ is a threat and 28...♕xe7 29 ♕b6+ ♔a8 30 ♕xa6+! ♔b8 31 ♕b6+ ♔a8 32 ♗c6+ ♗xc6 33 ♘xc6 ♖d7 34 ♘xe7 ♖xe7 35 ♕xb5 leads to a hopeless endgame for Black.

26 ♕xd4+ *(D)*



26 ... ♔xa5

Black is at least consistent. 26...♕c5 27 ♕xf6+ ♕d6 gives White a choice:

1) 28 ♖xf7 is not too good:

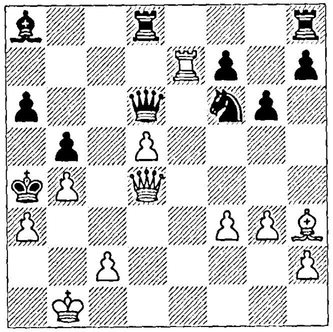
1a) After 28...♗xd5? 29 ♕d4+ ♔xa5 30 b4+ (30 ♕c3+ b4 31 axb4+ ♕xb4 32 ♕c7+ ♔b5 33 ♗f1+ ♗c4 doesn't give White more than a perpetual) 30...♔a4 31 ♖f6 ♗e6 32 ♕e3! (32 ♖xe6? ♕xe6 33 ♗xe6 ♖xd4 34 ♔b2 ♖c4!) 32...♖c8 33 ♗xe6! (after 33 ♔b2? ♖xc2+ 34 ♔xc2 ♖c8+ 35 ♔b2 ♕d1! it's suddenly Black who is mating) 33...♕d1+ 34 ♕c1 ♕xc1+ 35 ♔xc1 ♔xa3 36 ♗xc8 ♖xc8 37 ♖xa6+ ♔xb4 38 ♖a7 White has every chance to win the endgame.

1b) However, after the prosaic exchange of queens by 28...♕xf6! 29 ♖xf6+ ♔c7, White's scattered pieces make it very difficult for him to realize his advantage.

2) 28 ♕xf7 is just as inconclusive: 28...♖hf8 (Black loses on the spot after 28...♔xa5? 29 ♖e6 or 28...♗xd5? 29 b4 ♖b8 30 ♕g7) 29 ♕g7 ♖de8 (29...♕xd5? 30 ♖e6+ ♖d6 31 ♕xf8 ♕d1+ 32 ♔a2 ♗d5+ 33 ♘b3 ♗xe6 34 ♗xe6 and White wins, as taking the bishop costs Black more material) 30 ♖d7!? ♕e5 (White mates after 30...♖e1+? 31 ♔a2 ♗xd5+ 32 c4 ♕f6 33 ♖b7+! ♗xb7 34 ♕xb7+ ♔c5 35 ♕d5+ ♔b6 36 c5+!) 31 ♕xe5 ♖xe5 32 b4 ♖xd5 (32...♗xd5 is weaker because of the reply 33 f4) 33 ♖xh7 ♖h5! (after 33...♖d1+ 34 ♔b2 ♗xf3? 35 ♗g4! White wins a piece) and Black again saves the day by exchanging White's most active attacking piece.

3) However, there are no doubts about Kasparov's mighty 28 ♗e6!! ♗xd5 (28...♔xa5 29 b4+ ♔a4 30 ♕c3 ♗xd5 31 ♔b2 mates) 29 b4!. White's threats are ♕d4+ and ♗xd5, and after 29...♗a8 30 ♕xf7 ♕d1+ 31 ♔b2 ♕xf3 32 ♗f5! ♖d6 33 ♖a7 the attack triumphs.

27 b4+ ♔a4 *(D)*



28 ♕c3!?

This confirms that White's combination was partly intuitive and Kasparov only later worked out an arithmetically exact win. The text-move is sufficient, but gives Black more defensive resources than Kavalek's post-mortem idea 28 ♖a7! (28 ♕e3? doesn't work due to 28...♕xd5; then after 29 ♕b6, compared with note '3a1' to Black's 24th move 29...♕d1+ is possible; 29 ♖a7 ♗b7 30 ♖xb7 ♖he8 and 29 ♖e6!? ♗b7! are also insufficient for White) and now:

1) 28...♘xd5 29 ♖xa6+!! (29 ♕b2? ♘xb4) 29...♕xa6 30 ♕b2 ♘c3+ 31 ♕xc3 ♗d5 32 ♔b2 and there is no defence against ♕b3+!.

2) 28...♖c8 29 ♕d3 ♖xc2 (29...♗xd5 30 ♖xa6+! ♕xa6 31 ♔b2) 30 ♕xc2+ ♔xa3 31 ♕c3+ ♔a4 32 ♖xa6+! ♕xa6 33 ♔b2 and again Black can't avoid mate.

3) 28...♗xd5 29 ♕c3 (29 ♔b2? allows Black to exchange queens by 29...♗b7 and ...♕d4)

29...♖he8 30 ♔b2 ♖e2 31 ♕c7! and here the mating threats will cost Black most of his army.

4) Just as in the game Black's best chance is to gain a tempo with 28...♗b7 29 ♖xb7, and now:

4a) 29...♘xd5 30 ♗d7!! ♖xd7 (the threat was ♗xb5+ and 30...♖a8 31 ♗xb5+ axb5 32 ♖a7+ ♕a6 33 ♕xd5! doesn't help Black) 31 ♕b2 ♘c3+ (31...♘xb4 32 ♖xd7 ♕c5 33 ♖d4 is simple enough) 32 ♕xc3 ♕d1+ 33 ♔a2 ♖d3 34 ♖a7! and Black can choose only how White will mate him.

4b) 29...♖he8 30 ♗f1! ♖e1+ 31 ♔b2 ♖xf1 32 ♕c3 deflects the rook to create the well-known mating-net again; after 32...♖b1+ 33 ♔xb1 ♕xd5 34 ♖a7 ♖d6 35 ♔b2 Black's defences are too strained.

4c) After 29...♕xd5 White avoids the game continuation and creates a new mating pattern with 30 ♖b6! a5 (after 30...♖a8 31 ♕xf6 a5 32 ♗f1 White wins trivially) 31 ♖a6 ♖a8 32 ♕e3!! ♖xa6 (32...♖he8 also loses: 33 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 34 ♔b2 axb4 35 axb4) 33 ♔b2 axb4 34 axb4 ♕a2+ (the only move; 34...♔xb4 35 ♕c3+ ♔a4 36 ♕a3#) 35 ♔xa2 ♔xb4+ 36 ♔b2, which wins by force. After 36...♖c6 37 ♗f1! ♔a5 38 ♕a7+ ♖a6 39 ♕c5 ♖b8 40 ♕c7+ ♖bb6 41 ♕c3+ b4 42 ♕c4!, mate is unavoidable.

28 ... ♕xd5

28...♗xd5? 29 ♔b2 mates.

29 ♖a7

Now 29 ♔b2? ♕d4 is out of the question for White.

29 ... ♗b7

The only defence; Black must deflect the rook from the a-file for at least one move.

30 ♖xb7

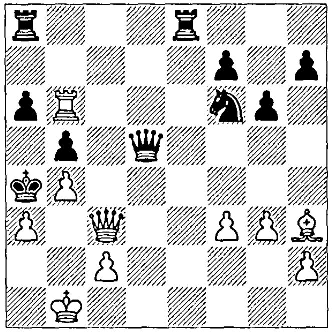
After 30 ♕c7? ♕d1+ Black gives a perpetual.

30 ... ♕c4?!

A natural attempt to get the king out of its coffin. White mates after 30...♖d6? 31 ♖b6! ♖xb6 32 ♔b2, but Black had two more resilient alternatives:

1) Interesting is 30...♘e4!? 31 fxe4 ♕c4. The idea behind the sacrifice is that if White continues 32 ♕f6 (as in the game), then at the end of the whole line (i.e. 32...♔xa3 33 ♕xa6+ ♔xb4 34 c3+ ♔xc3 35 ♕a1+ ♔d2 36 ♕b2+) Black's king can hide on the now closed e-file (36...♔e1 or 36...♔e3). Nevertheless, Kasparov shows that White wins after 32 ♖a7! ♖d1+ (32...♖a8 33 ♕e3 and ♔b2 decides) 33 ♔b2 ♕xc3+ 34 ♔xc3 ♖d6 35 e5 ♖b6 36 ♔b2. White's bishop is still far from b3, but it's not easy to prevent its transfer. After 36...♖e8 (36...♖d8 37 ♗d7 hastens the end) 37 ♗g2! ♖d8 (37...♖xe5 38 ♗b7 will cost Black a whole rook) 38 ♗b7 ♖d7 39 ♗c6! ♖d8 (39...♖d2 40 ♗e8) 40 ♗d7 Black is in zugzwang. If the d8-rook moves, then 41 c4 followed by 42 ♗xb5+ is decisive. Note the role of the e5-pawn, which limits the other rook.

2) 30...♖he8!? 31 ♖b6 (31 ♖a7? ♖d6 32 ♔b2 ♕e5 shows the point of Black's move) 31...♖a8 *(D)* and now:



2a) 32 ♗e6? ♖xe6 33 ♖xe6 ♕c4! 34 ♕xc4 bxc4 35 ♖xf6 ♔xa3 actually even causes White problems, although after 36 ♔c1!? (36 ♖xf7 ♖e8 37 ♔c1 c3 38 ♔d1 ♔b2! 39 ♖d7 ♖e3 40 f4 ♖e4 and with his active pieces Black has winning chances) 36...♖e8 37 ♔d2 ♔b2 38 ♖d6 c3+ 39 ♔d3 he should still be able to hold the game.

2b) 32 ♖xf6 ♕c4 33 ♕xc4 bxc4 34 ♔a2 ♖e7 35 ♗f1 a5 and Black frees his king, drawing easily.

2c) The winning move 32 ♗f1! and its implications were worked out by Ligterink. The above lines show that White has to stop ...♕c4; this move does so, and at the same time it creates the threat ♖d6:

2c1) 32...♘d7 33 ♖d6 ♖e1+ (33...♖ec8 34 ♕b2 ♕xf3 35 ♗d3! mates) 34 ♔b2 ♕e5 35 ♖d4 is a simple win.

2c2) 32...♖ed8 33 ♖c6! (threatening ♖c5) 33...♘h5 (33...♘d7 34 ♖d6 and White wins) 34 ♖c5 ♖ac8 (34...♕e6 35 ♔b2 ♕f6 36 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 37 ♗c4!) 35 ♔b2! and the recurrent mating threat nets White material.

2c3) The valiant try 32...♖e1+! 33 ♕xe1 ♘d7 fails to 34 ♖b7!! (the knight was aiming for c4) 34...♕xb7 (34...♘e5 loses to 35 ♕c3 ♕xf3 36 ♗d3 ♕d5 37 ♗e4!) 35 ♕d1!. White prevents the return of Black's queen to its commanding outpost and mates after 35...♔xa3 36 c3.

31 ♕xf6 ♔xa3

This allows Kasparov to crown his effort by playing the beautiful main line he was looking forward to. The only way to avert a forced loss was by 31...♖d1+! 32 ♔b2 ♖a8 (32...♕d4+ 33 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 34 ♖xf7 ♖d6 35 ♖e7 and ♗e6) 33 ♕b6 ♕d4+ (33...a5? 34 ♗d7! ♖d5 35 ♕e3 axb4 36 ♖a7+ mates) 34 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 and now:

1) 35 ♗d7 is an attractive attempt to play for zugzwang:

1a) 35...♖d2 36 ♗c6 f5 37 ♖c7! (37 ♖b6 ♖a7 38 ♗e8 ♖xh2!? and now 39 ♗f7 ♖xc2+ 40 ♔xc2 ♔xa3 or 39 ♗d7 ♖e2 40 ♗e6 ♖xe6 41 ♖xe6 a5 42 c3 ♖d7, breaking the mating-net, whereupon the game starts all over again) 37...♖b8 38 ♖a7 ♖b6 39 ♗e8 ♖xh2 40 ♖c7! White prevents ...♖xc2+ and prepares ♗f7) 40...♖e6 (with his rook on the a-file Black would have had the defence 40...a5; now this loses to 41 ♖a7) 41 ♗f7 ♖e3 42 ♖c6 a5 43 ♖a6 and White emerges a piece up, giving Black no chances whatsoever.

1b) The passive 35...♖d6!? is better. Then it's not easy for White to break through. Although the a8-rook can't move due to ♗xb5+, compared with note '1' to Black's 30th move the other rook has squares on its third rank. White's pieces are also limited in their movements: c4 or ♔a2 allows ...♖d2, while ♖c7 or bishop moves allow ...a5. The situation doesn't change after, for example, 36 f4 (36 g4 ♖f6 37 ♖c7 a5 frees the king) 36...f5 37 h3 h5! 38 h4 ♖f6, when 39 c4 ♖d6 40 cxb5 ♖d8 gets White nowhere.

2) Much simpler is the prosaic 35 ♖xf7 a5 36 ♗e6 axb4 37 ♗b3+ (37 axb4? is weak due to 37...♖d6!) 37...♔a5 38 axb4+ ♔b6 (38...♖xb4 39 c3 traps the rook and gives White both a material and positional advantage) 39 ♖xh7 and White will gradually win.

32 ♕xa6+ ♔xb4

33 c3+!

Topalov probably expected 33 ♗d7 ♖xd7 34 ♖xd7 ♖c8, when Black can still fight on.

33 ... ♔xc3

There is no choice, as 33...♔b3 34 ♕a2+ ♔xc3 35 ♕b2+ ♔d3 36 ♖e7! leads to mate.

34 ♕a1+ ♔d2

After 34...♔b4 35 ♕b2+ ♔a5 (35...♕b3 36 ♖xb5+ and 35...♔c5 36 ♖c7+ are similar) 36 ♕a3+ Black loses the queen trivially.

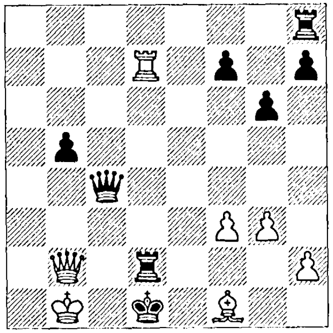
35 ♕b2+ ♔d1

35...♔e3? 36 ♖e7+ mates, while 35...♔e1 36 ♖e7+ ♔d1 37 ♗f1! is the same as in the game.

36 ♗f1! ♖d2

Still forced. Black can't protect c1, c2 and e2 simultaneously.

37 ♖d7! *(D)*



The final blow. Black can't save his queen.

37 ... ♖xd7

38 ♗xc4 bxc4

The mating threats force Black to give up even the h8-rook. The rest is simple.

39 ♕xh8 ♖d3

39...♖b7+ 40 ♔a2 ♔c2 41 ♕d4 activates the queen, but this is impossible to prevent anyway.

40 ♕a8 c3

41 ♕a4+ ♔e1

42 f4 f5

43 ♔c1 ♖d2

44 ♕a7 1-0

Summary

The first part of this fabulous game shows why the Pirc is not very popular at the highest level. Despite avoiding the most aggressive continuations, notably 7 g4!?, Kasparov emerged from the opening with a pleasant position. White's queen on h6, although slightly offside (this makes the straightforward 10 0-0-0? dubious), nevertheless prevented the natural kingside castling and could be quickly reactivated. The notes show that with his king still on e8 Black had to be careful about committal pawn moves; although natural enough, 10...e5 was not too flexible and could have been postponed. As it was, Topalov started to feel the pressure and rightly dissolved the central tension (14...exd4!) to gain counterplay. However, this not only activated Black's pieces, but also increased the scope of White's forces and from move 17 onwards Topalov had to reckon seriously with various tactical ambushes.

The active 18 ♘a5 pushed the game into stormy combinational waters, when perhaps a restrained approach (18 ♕e3!?) would have given White more chances for a durable edge. However, for a player of Kasparov's fantasy and imagination it proved impossible to resist the complications starting with 24 ♖xd4!. Here Topalov's sense of danger deserted him. Even if he didn't see a forced win after 24...cxd4?, he must have realized that White had at least a draw (30 ♕c7?) and with his king in the sarcophagus on a4 he risked much more than by seeking a suitable way to decline the sacrifice and curb White's attacking ambitions. The game continuation after 25 ♖e7+!! and all the sidelines in the notes prove that Kasparov's intuition and calculating abilities didn't let him down and White had an even more effective way (28 ♖a7!) to implement all the mating motifs on the b3-square or via the a-file.

Game 40

Veselin Topalov – Garry Kasparov

Linares 1999

Sicilian Defence, Najdorf/Scheveningen Variation [B80]

1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3 d6
3 d4 cxd4
4 ♘xd4 ♘f6
5 ♘c3 a6
6 f3!?

The English Attack against the Najdorf/Scheveningen complex has become probably the most topical opening line of all; practically every significant event brings new material, revises old assessments, refutes whole subvariations... Naturally, the theory of the line has taken giant leaps forward, and the rapidly increasing strength of chess-playing software has also greatly contributed to the analysis of the resulting irrational complications. Topalov's move-order aims to avoid Kasparov's pet line 6 ♗e3 ♘g4!?, which still continues to serve its master (and not only him) well.

6 ... e6

Independent alternatives are 6...♘c6 7 ♗e3 d5!?, 6...♕b6!? and the full-blooded Najdorf move 6...e5. Kasparov takes up the gauntlet and shows a piece of his famed preparation in the Scheveningen branch, but as we will see below, his effort doesn't consign White's set-up to the archives and only awakens new interest in the line.

7 ♗e3 b5
8 g4

This is the move-order Kasparov himself prefers as White. One of the reasons is that 8 ♕d2 ♘bd7 9 0-0-0 ♗b7 10 g4 allows 10...♘b6!? 11 ♕f2 ♘fd7. Now after 12 ♔b1 ♖c8 13 ♗d3?! ♖xc3 14 bxc3 ♕c7 15 ♘e2 ♗e7 16 g5 0-0 17 h4 ♘a4 18 ♗c1 ♘e5 19 h5 d5 Black had a powerful attack in Movsesian-Kasparov, Sarajevo 2000.

8 ... h6

In the Keres Attack, slowing down White's kingside aggression has been considered more or less mandatory for a long time, but here White's build-up is somewhat slower. This prompted Black to look for alternatives to the committal text-move, which renders future kingside castling very questionable indeed. 8...♘fd7, in the spirit of the previous note, can be answered by 9 ♕d2 ♘b6 10 0-0-0 (10 a4!? is also interesting; White turns his attention to Black's queenside before committing his king) 10...♗b7, when White has a pleasant choice between 11 ♘b3 and 11 ♗g5!?, both of which have been successfully tested in practice.

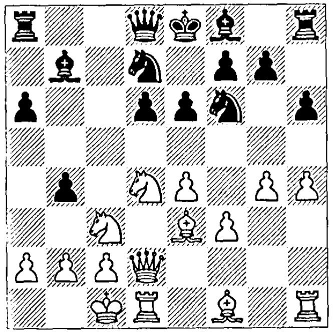
9 ♕d2

Attempts to delay castling are less promising; after 9 h4 b4 10 ♘ce2 e5! 11 ♘b3 ♗e6 12 g3 d5 13 ♗d3 ♘bd7 14 ♕e2 a5 White has more trouble with placing his king than Black.

9 ... ♘bd7
10 0-0-0 ♗b7
11 h4

Some 15 years of practice have established this as the main line. Recently we have seen also a revival of the older 11 ♗d3 ♘e5 12 ♖he1. Here Black came up with the interesting novelty 12...♕a5!? and won quickly after 13 ♘b3 ♕c7 14 ♕f2 ♘xd3+ 15 ♖xd3 ♘d7 16 ♖d2 ♗e7 17 a3 ♖c8 18 f4 ♘c5 19 ♗xc5? dxc5 20 ♖ed1 b4 21 ♖d7 ♕b8 22 axb4 cxb4 23 ♕b6 ♕xf4+ 24 ♔b1 ♗c6 in Fedorov-Gelfand, Polanica Zdroj Rubinstein mem 2000.

11 ... b4 *(D)*



12 ♘a4

The other knight moves have their tactical drawbacks:

1) The most natural continuation, 12 ♘ce2 d5 13 ♗h3, allows Black to gain a vital tempo by hitting White's knight after 13...dxe4 14 g5 hxg5 15 hxg5 exf3. Now 16 ♘f4 ♘e4 17 ♕e1 ♖xh3! 18 ♘xh3 e5 19 ♘b3 a5 gives Black a noticeable edge.

2) The other try, 12 ♘b1, not only misplaces the knight, but also robs White's king of its natural refuge. This shows clearly after 12...d5 13 ♗h3 g5! 14 hxg5 hxg5 15 exd5 ♘xd5 16 ♗xg5 ♘b6! 17 ♗g2 ♖xh1 18 ♗xh1 ♖c8 19 ♖e1 ♘c5! (even more impressive than 19...♕a5, as played in Anand-Kasparov, Linares 1999) 20 f4 ♗g7, and now:

2a) 21 ♘f5 was played in Mastrovasilis-Lutz, Corfu 1999. Now, according to Lutz, 21...b3! 22 ♗xd5 (22 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 23 ♕d4 ♘d3+! 24 ♕xd3 ♕f2 transposes to the game and is good for Black) 22...♗xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♗xb2+! 24 ♔xb2 bxc2+ 25 ♔a1 cxb1♕+ 26 ♖xb1 ♕xb1+ 27 ♔xb1 ♖b8+ 28 ♕b3 ♘xb3 29 ♘d6+ ♔d7 30 ♘xf7 ♘d4+ gives Black a clear advantage.

2b) Even after the stronger 21 ♘xe6!? fxe6 22 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♕xd5 ♔f7 24 ♕f3 (weaker is 24 ♕c4?! ♕d6! with the double threat ...♘d3+ and ...♗xb2+) 24...b3 25 f5 (25 axb3 ♘xb3+ 26 ♔d1 ♖xc2! gives Black an overwhelming attack) 25...♔g8! (this prophylactic move is better than the forcing 25...♗xb2+ 26 ♔d2; e.g., 26...♕d6+ 27 ♔e2 ♕h2+ 28 ♔f1 ♕xc2 29 axb3, when Black is the one who must be careful) 26 axb3 (26 fxe6? ♗xb2+! and now 27 ♔xb2 ♘a4+ 28 ♔a3 ♕d6+ 29 ♔xa4 ♖c4+ leads to mate, while after 27 ♔d2 ♕d6+ 28 ♔e2 ♕xe6+ Black liquidates the dangerous pawn with tempo; after 29 ♔f2 ♗d4+ 30 ♔f1 bxa2 Black wins) 26...♘xb3+ 27 ♔d1 ♘d4 28 ♕e4 ♕xb2 29 c3 White's position barely holds together, while Black can force a draw at will anytime.

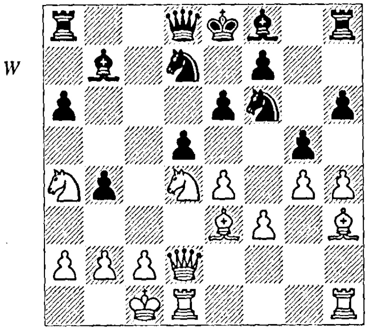
12 ... ♕a5

The only other move that has been tried is 12...d5 and although it's risky and certainly not as effective as in the note above, it nevertheless still seems playable. After 13 ♗h3! Black must tread with great care:

1) 13...♕a5 is risky. After 14 b3 g5 15 hxg5 hxg5 16 ♗xg5 dxe4 17 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 18 g5 exf3!? 19 ♕f4 ♘h5 20 ♕e3 ♗e7 21 ♘xf3 Black's problems with his king persist; e.g., 21...♘g3 22 ♖h2 ♘f5 23 ♗xf5 ♖xh2 24 ♗e4! ♖c8 25 ♗xb7 ♖cxc2+ 26 ♔b1, when 26...♕xa4? fails to 27 ♖d8+! ♗xd8 28 bxa4.

2) The best defence against the serious g5-g6 threat is the radical 13...g5!? *(D)*. Then:

2a) 14 ♗g2 and now White quickly crashed through after 14...gxh4? 15 ♖xh4 dxe4 16 g5 ♘d5 17 ♖xe4 hxg5 18 ♗xg5 ♕a5 19 f4 ♖h2 20 ♘xe6! in Kasparov-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2000, but 14...♖g8 is perfectly playable for Black.



2b) 14 hxg5 hxg5 15 e5 ♘xe5 16 ♗xg5 ♖g8 17 ♘b6 (17 f4!?) 17...♖b8! (17...♘c4? 18 ♘xc4 dxc4 19 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 20 ♘xe6 is a similar motif as above, Kasparov-Wojtkiewicz, Kopavogur rpd 2000) and although the open e-file against the black king looks pretty intimidating, Black's active pieces give him a lot of counterplay. It is important that 18 ♖he1 (18 ♕f4 ♘g6!) 18...♗d6 19 f4? doesn't work because of 19...♖xg5 20 fxg5 ♘e4 21 ♖xe4 dxe4 22 ♘xe6 ♕xb6 23 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 24 ♖xd6 ♔e7.

13 b3 ♘c5

13...d5?! can lead not only to note '1' to Black's 12th move after 14 ♗h3, but also gives White an extra tactical possibility: 14 e5!, when 14...♘xe5 can be met by 15 ♘xe6! fxe6? 16 ♗b6.

The text-move is consistent, but the more modest 13...♗e7!? is also worth trying: 14 ♔b1 (14 ♗h3 runs into the typical 14...g5!) 14...♘c5 15 ♘xc5 dxc5 16 ♘e2 ♖d8 17 ♕c1 ♘d7 18 ♘g3 ♘e5 19 ♗e2 ♖xd1 20 ♕xd1 ♕c7 21 ♗f4, Kasparov-Van Wely, Internet (KasparovChess) 2000, and now the circumspect 21...g6!? would have kept White's knight at bay and given Black a satisfactory position.

14 a3

Strictly the only move. After 14 ♗h3? ♘xa4 15 bxa4 ♕xa4 16 g5 ♘d7! 17 g6 ♘c5 the threat of ...♕a3+ and ...♘a4 is too strong.

14 ... ♘xa4

For 14...♖c8!? see Anand-Khalifman, Shenyang FIDE World Cup 2000 (Game 50).

15 axb4 ♕c7

16 bxa4 d5

16...♘d7 is weaker in view of 17 ♘b3!? d5 18 ♘a5.

17 e5 ♘d7

18 f4

After 18 ♗f4? ♘xe5 19 ♖e1 ♗d6 the threat of ...♘d3+ gives Black time to consolidate his large positional advantage.

18 ... ♘b6

After a series of forced moves Black comes up with a novelty. However, the text-move is very natural and Topalov had also analysed it at home prior to the game. Even after the older move 18...a5 19 ♘b5 ♕c8 (after 19...♕c6 20 bxa5 Black can't play 20...d4? 21 ♗xd4 ♕xh1 22 ♘c7+) 20 ♗d4 axb4 21 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 22 exd6 one can hardly give a definite verdict, but here the unopposed d4-bishop plays a major role in both the attack and the defence.

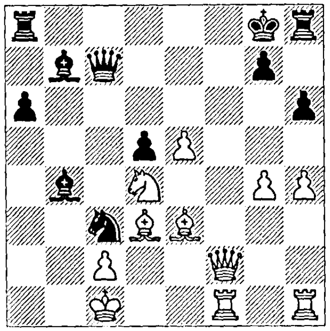
19 a5?!

As Black practically refutes this logical continuation, White subsequently started looking for alternatives. His queenside is seriously weakened and if Black gets time to develop the kingside, White's prospects will be bleak. Therefore the main danger for Black is the aggressive idea of the Russian junior Grishchuk, 19 f5!. Then:

1) 19...♘c4 20 ♕e1! (20 ♗xc4 may be met by 20...♕xc4, while even 20...dxc4!? 21 fxe6 ♗xh1 is far from clear, because the light-squared bishop is an important attacking piece) 20...♘xe3 21 ♕xe3 ♗c8!? (21...♗xb4 22 fxe6 0-0 23 g5 ♗c3 24 ♖d3! ♖ac8 25 ♖xc3 ♕xc3 26 ♕xc3 ♖xc3 27 gxh6 gxh6 was played in Hraček-Stohl, Slovakian Cht 2000; now 28 ♖g1+! ♔h8 29 ♗d3 would have given White a clear advantage) 22 b5. White is better, as his king can flee via d2 if necessary and Black's forces are still uncoordinated.

2) 19...♘xa4 20 fxe6 ♘c3 21 exf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♗d3 ♗xb4 23 ♖df1+ ♔g8 24 ♕f2 *(D)* is a position that has arisen in numerous games. A relatively recent attempt is 24...♗a3+ (the main points are that 24...♖f8? 25 ♕xf8+! ♗xf8 26 ♖xf8+ costs Black a piece and that after 24...♘a2+ 25 ♔b2! ♗c3+ 26 ♔b1! White avoids the perpetual and has a continuing attack) 25 ♔d2 ♘e4+ 26 ♗xe4 dxe4:

2a) 27 ♕f5 ♗b4+! (after 27...♕c4 28 ♘e6 ♕d5+ 29 ♗d4 ♕d7 White consolidates by playing 30 ♔e3!) 28 ♔d1 ♕c4 29 ♘e6 ♕d5+ 30 ♔e2 (30 ♗d4? is now inferior in view of 30...♕d7) 30...♕c4+ led to a draw in the game



Anand-Gelfand, Shenyang FIDE World Cup 2000.

2b) 27 g5!? ♗d5 28 gxh6 ♗b2 was played somewhat later in Shirov-Anand, Sydney rpd (Olympic exhibition) 2000. Now 29 ♔d1! ♕a5 30 ♕f4 would have enabled the king to escape via f2; after 30...♖xh6 (30...♗c4 31 hxg7 ♕a1+ 32 ♗c1 ♗xc1 33 ♕f8+! mates) 31 ♘f5 ♖h5 32 ♖fg1 it's White who is attacking.

19 ... ♘c4

19...♘a4 is weaker. Now 20 c4! dxc4 (after 20...♖c8 the safest reply is 21 ♖h2!? with the idea 21...dxc4 22 ♕c2 ♕d7 23 ♘xe6) is more or less forced and gives White a choice:

1) After 21 ♗g2?! c3 (21...♖c8!?) 22 ♕c2 ♗xg2 23 ♕xa4+ (23 ♕xg2?! ♖c8 24 ♕a2 ♘b2 25 ♘xe6 ♕c6! is bad for White, as 26 ♘xf8? leads immediately to 26...c2) 23...♕d7 the tempting 24 ♘xe6 ♗c6! 25 ♖xd7 (25 ♘xf8? leads to the surprising 25...♕d2+!! 26 ♗xd2 d2+ 27 ♖xd2 ♗xa4, when the knight is trapped) 25...♗xa4 26 ♘xf8 (26 ♘c7+ ♔xd7 27 ♘xa8 ♔c6 28 ♘b6 ♗b3 is hopeless for White) 26...♗xd7 27 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 leads to an endgame that only White risks losing.

2) 21 ♕c2! is stronger:

2a) Black can't survive 21...♘c3? 22 ♘xe6! fxe6 23 ♕g6+ ♔e7 24 ♗c5+ ♕xc5 25 bxc5 and ♗xc4, as most of his pieces are still asleep.

2b) 21...♗xh1 22 ♕xa4+ ♕d7 (22...♔e7? 23 ♘f5+! exf5 24 ♗c5+ mates) 23 ♕xd7+ (23 xe6?! is unconvincing due to 23...♗c6!) 23...♔xd7 24 ♘xe6+! ♔xe6 25 ♗xc4+ ♔e7 26 ♖xh1 ♔e8 27 ♔c2!? ♗xb4 28 ♖b1 gives White a strong and dangerous initiative. Black can't castle any more and connecting his rooks won't be easy.

2c) The trickiest is 21...♕d7 22 ♗xc4 ♖c8 (after 22...♗xh1 23 ♘xe6 ♕c6 24 ♘c7+! ♕xc7 25 ♗xf7+! White wins beautifully) 23 ♘xe6 ♕c6 (23...♕xe6 24 ♗xe6 ♖xc2+ 25 ♔xc2 fxe6 26 ♔b3 is hopeless for Black) 24 ♖h2! and all the possible captures favour White:

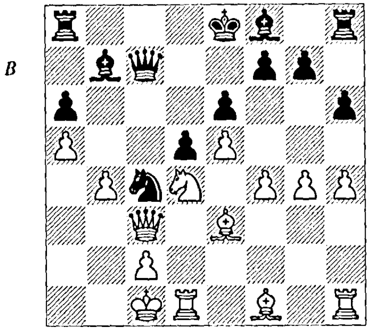
2c1) 24...♗xb4 25 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 26 ♘f5 ♕xc4 27 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 28 ♕xc4 ♖c8 29 ♖c2 ♖xc4 30 ♖xc4 regains the piece.

2c2) 24...fxe6 25 ♕g6+ ♔e7 26 ♗c5+ ♘xc5 27 bxc5 ♖d8 28 ♖d6! and White's powerful pawns should decide.

2c3) 24...♕xc4 25 ♖d8+ ♔e7 26 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 27 ♘c7! and again Black's king is trapped in the middle.

20 ♕c3 *(D)*

20 ♗xc4? is out of the question owing to 20...dxc4 or even 20...♕xc4.



20 ... ♕e7!

Topalov had overlooked this finesse. After 20...♖c8?! 21 ♗d2! White can keep his queenside intact: 21...♘xd2 22 ♕xd2 ♕e7 23 ♖h3! or 21...♕e7 22 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 23 ♕b2.

21 ♗xc4 dxc4

22 ♗d2?!

A dubious decision, born out of the failure of White's home preparation. Saving the exchange was better:

1) 22 ♕xc4? and now, rather than 22...♗xh1? which loses to 23 ♘b5!, 22...♗d5 or 22...♖c8 would lead to the opposite result.

2) 22 ♖hf1 ♕xb4 23 ♕xb4 ♗xb4 24 f5 is an aggressive attempt to wrest the initiative, but Black can counter in style with 24...♗d5 25 fxe6 fxe6 26 ♘e2! g5! (preventing the activation of White's knight is imperative; 26...♗xa5

27 ♘f4 ♖d8 28 ♗c5 can be risky for Black, while 26...♗a3+ 27 ♔d2 0-0-0 28 ♔c3 also gets Black nowhere) 27 hxg5 hxg5 28 ♗xg5 ♖h2 29 c3 ♗c5!, followed by ...♖b8, gives Black a dangerous attack.

3) Less ambitious is 22 ♖h3 ♕xb4 23 ♕xb4 ♗xb4 24 ♗d2 ♗c5. Although Black is better due to his active bishops, his advantage is smaller than it could have been in the game.

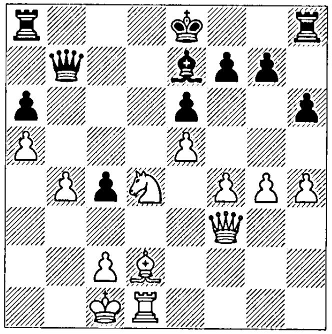
22 ... ♗xh1
23 ♖xh1 ♕b7
24 ♖d1 ♗e7

After 24...♖b8 the b-pawn is protected indirectly due to the ♘c6 motif, but a good alternative was 24...♕d5!? 25 ♕f3 0-0-0 26 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 27 ♘f3 ♗e7, when after 28 ♖e1, the fact that the rook is already on d5 enables Black to play 28...♖hd8.

25 ♕f3! *(D)*

Topalov overcomes the first shock and fully realizes that his weakened king makes it necessary for him to simplify. 25 ♕xc4 ♖c8 and 25 f5 ♕d5 are substantially weaker and only enhance Black's attacking chances.

B



25 ... 0-0-0

Black can't avoid exchanging queens, but he can choose the way to do it. After 25...♕xf3 26 ♘xf3 ♖b8 (26...c3? doesn't work due to 27 ♗xc3 ♖c8 28 ♗d2 ♖c4 29 ♔b2! and ♔b3, while 26...0-0-0 27 ♖e1 is not ideal for Black either, since with both White's knight and rook on the board Black has more problems with his vulnerable c-pawn) 27 c3 ♖d8 the threat of ...♖d3 forces an exchange of rooks. Even so, White retains excellent drawing chances with 28 ♗e1! (28 ♗e3 is weaker due to 28...♖xd1+ 29 ♔xd1 ♔d7 30 h5 g6) 28...♖xd1+ 29 ♔xd1 ♔d7 30 ♘d2.

26 ♕c6+!?

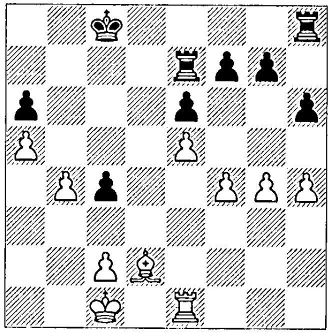
26 ♘c6? is just plain bad due to 26...♗xh4 and ...♖d5, while 26 ♕xb7+ ♔xb7 leaves the black king well placed to become active after an exchange of rooks.

26 ... ♕xc6

This was the last moment to avoid the endgame and 26...♔b8!? 27 ♕xc4 ♖c8 28 ♕b3 ♖hd8 (or 28...♗xh4!?) certainly deserved attention. In a lively middlegame Black's pieces are active enough to make the extra exchange tell.

27 ♘xc6 ♖d7
28 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7
29 ♖e1 *(D)*

B



29 ... h5?

This is too impetuous. The semi-closed nature of the position makes Black's task difficult anyway and the text-move, although it cripples White's bishop, greatly increases this tendency. The immediate 29...♔b7 is more flexible.

30 g5 ♔b7
31 ♗e3 ♖d7

The only move; after 31...♔c6? 32 ♗d4 and c3 Black would have no way to break through.

32 ♗c5 ♔c6
33 ♗d6 f6
34 gxf6?

Although this doesn't lose directly, it's definitely a step in the wrong direction. White opens the g-file and although he occupies it with his rook, Black has two major pieces and will later force his opponent to guard the open file by passive means. It was sounder to keep the position closed; 34 g6! ♖h6 35 ♖g1 probably draws, as the only plausible winning attempt, 35...c3 36 ♖g3 ♔d5 37 ♖xc3 ♖xg6 38 ♖c5+ ♔e4 39 ♖c6, is very double-edged; after all, White's passed pawns are more advanced than Black's.

34 ... gxf6
35 ♖g1 f5

This is necessary. 35...fxe5? 36 ♗xe5 activates White's bishop and Black has too many loose pawns to have serious winning chances.

36 ♔d2 ♔d5

Kasparov condemns this move and indicates 36...♖hh7!? as superior:

1) 37 ♖g8 ♖hg7 38 ♖c8+ ♔b5 39 ♖b8+ ♖b7 40 ♖c8 ♖g2+ 41 ♔c3 ♖g3+ 42 ♔d4 ♖g4 43 ♔c3 ♖xh4 44 ♖c5+ ♔a4 45 ♖xc4 ♖g7 is miserable for White.

2) 37 ♖g6 is more testing. White hits e6 and makes it more difficult for Black to contest the g-file. Nevertheless, after 37...♖hg7!? (37...♔d5 38 ♗f8! ♔e4+ 39 ♔c3 is the position White is trying to reach; an immediate invasion has been prevented and breaking through the defences is far from easy) 38 ♖xc6 ♖g4 39 ♔e3 ♔d5 Black retains winning chances, although White is not without counterplay.

37 ♔e3

A solid move, but more active was 37 ♔c3!? ♖hh7 (37...♔e4 is too impatient: 38 ♖g6! ♖e8 39 ♔xc4 ♔xf4 40 ♔d4 and the c-pawn is suddenly very dangerous) 38 ♗f8 (38 ♖d1+?! is weaker since after 38...♔c6 39 ♖d4 ♖hg7 40 ♖xc4+ ♔b7, the h4-pawn falls) and after 38...♔e4 39 ♖g6 White gets the position mentioned in line '2' above.

37 ... ♖hh7
38 ♗f8!

As has already been said, White must keep Black's rooks from the g-file.

38 ... ♖hf7
39 ♗h6 ♖h7 *(D)*

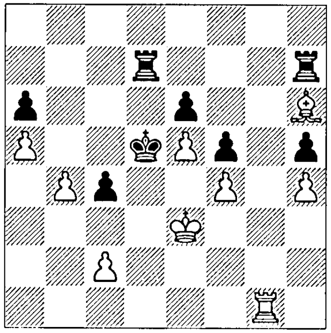
Black repeats moves just before the time-control.

40 ♖g6?

Topalov's refusal to comply is the decisive mistake, which allows Kasparov to achieve an ideal set-up. Other ideas:

1) 40 ♖g8?! ♖b7! (40...♖xh6?? 41 ♖c8 mates) 41 ♖c8 ♖hc7 42 ♖a8 ♖xb4 43 ♖xa6 ♖d7 gives Black excellent winning chances.

W



2) After the reasonable 40 ♗f8 ♖hf7 (not 40...♖df7?, which even loses to 41 ♖d1+ ♔c6 42 ♖d6+ ♔c7 43 ♖xa6!) 41 ♗h6 ♔c6 42 ♖g6 ♖de7 (42...♖fe7 gets Black nowhere after 43 ♗f8; White can even contemplate 43 ♗g5 ♖e8 44 ♖h6) 43 ♔d4 (43 ♖g8!? ♖b7 44 ♖e8 is also possible) 43...♔b5 44 ♔c3 Kasparov shows that he can untangle his passive rooks by 44...♖c8 45 ♗g5 ♖d7 46 ♖h6 ♖d1 47 ♖xh5 ♖h1, but even here Black faces a tough technical job after 48 ♖h7 ♖h3+ 49 ♔d4 ♔xb4 50 ♖c7 ♔xa5 51 ♖xc4.

40 ... ♖b7!
41 ♗f8

Forced. After 41 c3 ♖b8! the bishop will not be able to return to via f8 any more; White can't prevent the manoeuvre ...♖e8, ...♖d7 and ...♔c6 with a decisive invasion down the d-file.

41 ... ♖hf7
42 ♗d6

42 ♖f6? ♖bd7! 43 c3 ♖xf6 44 exf6 e5 45 ♗e7 exf4+ 46 ♔xf4 ♔e6 only hastens the end.

42 ... ♖g7
43 ♖g5 ♖bf7!

Doubling rooks on his second rank proves very effective. Black's last move prepares the advance of the f-pawn after ...♖xg5.

44 c3

A sad concession, but 44 ♖xh5? allows an immediate invasion by 44...♖g3+, while after 44 ♔f3 ♔d4 45 ♖xh5 ♖h7!? and 44 ♗c5 ♖xg5 45 hxg5 h4 Black wins readily enough.

44 ... ♔c6
45 ♔f3 ♔b5
46 ♗c5

White returns with his bishop and relies on his fortress. 46 ♖xh5 establishes material equality, but doesn't help: 46...♖h7 (46...♖g1 is less impressive due to 47 ♗c5!) 47 ♖xh7 (after 47 ♖g5 ♖xh4 the unleashed rooks finish White off) 47...♖xh7 48 ♔g3 ♔a4 49 ♗c5 ♔b3 50 ♗d4 ♖h8! and White is in zugzwang:

1) 51 ♔h3 ♖d8 52 h5 (52 b5 axb5 53 a6 b4) 52...♖xd4! 53 cxd4 c3 and White's new-born queen falls immediately.

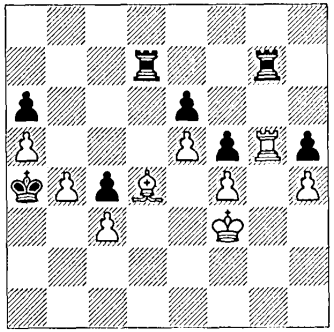
2) 51 b5 axb5 52 a6 ♖a8 53 h5 (53 a7 b4 54 cxb4 c3 55 b5 c2 56 ♗e3 ♖xa7 is no improvement for White) 53...♖xa6 54 h6 ♔c2 55 ♔h4 ♖a1 56 ♔g5 ♖h1 57 ♔g6 ♔d3 and White can't prevent ...b4.

46 ... ♔a4

47 ♗d4

47 ♖xh5 loses as above, to 47...♖h7.

47 ... ♖d7! *(D)*



Preparing the removal of White's key defensive piece.

48 ♔e3

Now after 48 ♖xh5 the simplest is 48...♖xd4! 49 cxd4 c3 50 ♖h8 (50 ♔e2 loses to 50...c2 51 ♔d2 ♔b3) 50...♖c7, when the c-pawn will cost White a rook. 48 ♔e2 ♔b3 49 ♔e3 ♔b2 only slightly delays the impending breakthrough.

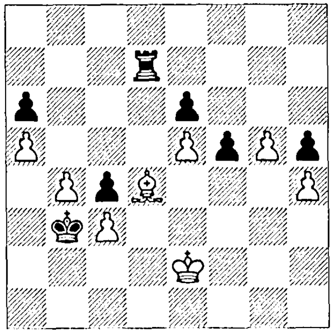
48 ... ♔b3

49 ♔e2 ♖xg5

The preparations are over. Black can't improve his position by quiet means any more and decides to act. 49...♔c2 50 ♔e3 ♖xg5 51 fxg5 f4+?! 52 ♔xf4! ♖xd4+ 53 cxd4 ♔d3 54 g6 c3 55 g7 c2 56 ♔g5! (56 g8♕? loses to 56...c1♕+ 57 ♔f3 ♕f1+) 56...c1♕+ 57 ♔g6 is insufficient for Black, as he can't prevent the promotion of the g-pawn; the endgame arising after 57...♔xd4 58 g8♕ ♕g1+ 59 ♔f7 ♕xg8+ 60 ♔xg8 ♔xe5 61 ♔g7 ♔d5 62 ♔g6 e5 63 ♔xh5 e4 64 ♔g4 ♔d4 65 b5 axb5 is equal. However, an alternative solution is 49...♖xd4!? 50 ♖xg7 (50 cxd4 ♖c7 is similar) 50...♔xc3, when the c-pawn will decide.

50 fxg5 *(D)*

50 hxg5?! h4 51 ♔f3 h3 52 g6 (52 ♔g3 loses to 52...♖xd4!) 52...♖g7 53 ♔g3 ♖xg6+ 54 ♔xh3 ♔c2 is hopeless for White.



50 ... ♖xd4!?

Now Black wins the arising endgame in a study-like manner, but from a practical point of view 50...f4 was perhaps simpler:

1) 51 ♔f2?! ♖xd4! 52 cxd4 c3 53 g6 c2 54 g7 c1♕ 55 g8♕ ♕e3+ 56 ♔f1 f3 57 ♕g3 (57 ♕xe6+ loses outright to 57...♔b2 58 ♕c4 ♕d2!) 57...♕e2+ 58 ♔g1 ♔xb4 and the queen ending is even worse for White than in the game.

2) Black possibly wanted to avoid the complications after 51 b5!? axb5 52 a6 b4 53 a7 ♖d8 54 cxb4 ♔xb4, although White's counterplay is still insufficient:

2a) 55 ♔f3 c3 56 ♗b6 c2! 57 ♗xd8 c1♕ 58 a8♕ ♕h1+ is relatively simple.

2b) After 55 g6 c3 56 ♔f3 ♔c4! 57 ♗xc3 ♔xc3 58 ♔xf4 ♔d4 59 g7 ♖g8 White is in zugzwang.

2c) 55 ♗b6 ♖a8 56 ♔f3 (56 ♔d2 ♔b3 57 g6 c3+ 58 ♔c1 c2 59 g7 f3 and ...♖d8 mates) 56...c3 57 ♔xf4 c2 58 ♗e3 ♖xa7 59 g6 ♔c4 60 ♔g5 ♖a3 61 ♗f4 ♖f3 62 ♗c1 (62 g7 ♖xf4!) 62...♖f1 63 ♗e3 ♔d3 and the bishop's diagonal is too short.

51 cxd4 c3

52 g6 c2

53 g7 c1♕

54 g8♕ ♕c4+

55 ♔e3

Now Black wins virtually by force, but even after 55 ♔f3 (55 ♔e1 ♕xb4+) 55...♕d5+ (after 55...♕f1+? 56 ♔e3 f4+ 57 ♔e4 f3 58 ♕g3 Black loses the important f-pawn) 56 ♔e2 ♔xb4 his advantage is overwhelming.

55 ... ♔c3!

A beautiful example of positional factors and piece coordination outweighing a material advantage in a queen endgame.

56 ♕d8

White's queen is misplaced and the text-move doesn't change this. After 56 ♔f3 ♕f1+ 57 ♔e3 f4+!? 58 ♔e4 f3 59 ♕g3 ♕e2+ 60 ♔f4 ♔xd4 the f-pawn is taboo and Black wins. The last desperate attempt to create some confusion with 56 b5 is best countered by 56...axb5!? (56...♕xd4+ 57 ♔f3 ♕d5+ 58 ♔f2 axb5 59 ♕c8+ ♔d3 60 a6 is less clear) 57 a6 ♕xd4+ (57...b4!?) 58 ♔f3 ♕d5+ and Black takes on e5 with check.

56 ... ♕d3+

57 ♔f4

Here the king will be in danger, but after 57 ♔f2 f4! 58 ♕g5 ♕xd4+ 59 ♔e2 ♕d2+ 60 ♔f1 ♕e3 White is in zugzwang and has no sensible moves.

57 ... ♕d2+

57...♔d2 58 ♔g5 f4! is even more convincing; the passed pawn is unstoppable.

58 ♔f3 ♕d1+

59 ♔e3?!

This allows the final mating attack and shortens White's suffering. However, even the stronger 59 ♔f2 can't change the result after 59...f4! 60 ♕c8+ (60 ♕g5 ♕xd4+ transposes to the note to White's 57th move) 60...♔d2 61 ♕xa6 (61 ♕xe6 ♕e2+ 62 ♔g1 f3 63 ♕a2+ ♔e3 64 ♕b3+ ♔xd4 and the checks end) 61...♕e1+ 62 ♔g2 ♕g3+ 63 ♔h1 f3 64 ♕f1 ♕xh4+ 65 ♔g1 ♕g3+ 66 ♔h1 ♕e1! 67 ♔g1 h4 68 a6 f2+.

59 ... ♕g1+

60 ♔e2

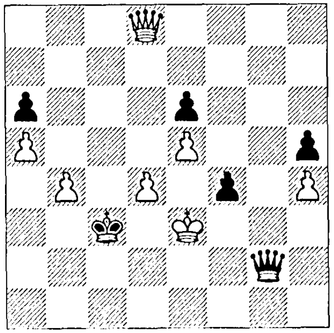
After 60 ♔f3 ♕f1+ 61 ♔e3 (otherwise the f-pawn queens) 61...f4+ 62 ♔e4 ♔d2! White has no defence against ...♕d3-e3#.

60 ... ♕g2+

61 ♔e3

61 ♔e1 ♔d3 mates.

61 ... f4+! *(D)*



0-1

After 62 ♔xf4 ♔d3 White can choose only between being mated on f2 or g4.

Summary

The game started with a heated theoretical battle that Kasparov decided in his favour with the cunning 20...♕c7!. With hindsight it's easy to condemn 19 a5?!; once White realizes his queenside is condemned anyway the decision to go for the jugular with 19 f5! suggests itself. In a difficult situation Topalov resorted to 22 ♗d2?!, but after this panicky reaction Black, notwithstanding all the technical problems, was fully in command and had very realistic chances to convert his extra exchange into victory. However, he had to be careful not to oversimplify the position; with only one open file on the board it takes some time for rooks to become active, so it was a good idea to keep an extra minor piece on the board (with 24...♕d5!?), or even try to avoid exchanging queens altogether (26...♔b8!?). On the other hand, exchanging rooks would usually play into Black's hands, as it would lessen White's chances for counterplay (this was even more marked later in the game after the possible 46 ♖xh5).

From move 29 onwards Black tried to create inroads for his rooks; to defend his fortress White had to limit the number of possible entry points. Both sides sinned against their main goals with 29...h5? and 34 gxf6?, but the really serious mistake was 40 ♖g6?, which let the rooks out of the cage. As a result Topalov was reduced to passivity and Black inexorably continued to strengthen his position (43...♖bf7!, followed by the king march). Kasparov's spectacular choice 50...♖xd4!? spiced up the technical stage, although purists could complain that there was more than one way to win (49...♖xd4!?, 50...f4). The final mating attack with limited material is both beautiful and very instructive.

Game 41

Matthew Sadler – Michal Krasenkow

Bundesliga 1998/9

Queen's Gambit Declined, Noteboom/Abrahams Variation [D31]

1 d4 d5
2 c4 e6
3 ♘c3 c6
4 ♘f3

In the opening we see some interesting shadow boxing. As White, Sadler has never tried the sharp Marshall Gambit (4 e4!?; see Game 5), but he also refrains from his usual 4 e3, as Krasenkow avoids the complicated Meran (4...♘f6 5 ♘f3, etc.; see Games 1 and 19), preferring a reasonable version of the Stonewall set-up with 4...f5!?.

4 ... dxc4!?

White was doubtless prepared for this move, as the double-edged Noteboom/Abrahams Variation has a place in Krasenkow's repertoire.

5 a4

Sadler has no desire to play a real gambit after 5 e4 b5 6 ♗g5 ♗e7 (or even 6...f6!?) and goes for the main line.

5 ... ♗b4
6 e3 b5
7 ♗d2 a5

7...♗b7 usually only transposes to the game since after 8 b3 a5, White has nothing better than 9 axb5, as 9 bxc4 bxc4!? 10 ♗xc4 ♘f6 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♕e2 ♘bd7, followed by ...c5, gives Black full equality.

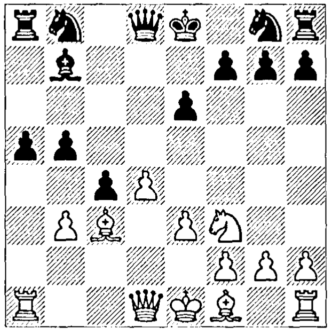
A double-edged independent attempt to hold on to the extra material is 7...♕e7!? 8 axb5 (8 ♕c2!? is interesting; after the natural 8...♘f6 9 axb5 ♗xc3 10 ♕xc3 cxb5 11 b3 ♘e4 12 ♕a5 ♘xd2 13 ♘xd2 White wins back the pawn and instead of a proud queenside phalanx Black will be left with an isolated a-pawn) 8...♗xc3 9 ♗xc3 cxb5 10 d5 ♘f6 11 d6 ♕b7 12 b3!? cxb3 (after 12...0-0 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♕d4 e5 15 ♕h4 ♔g7 16 bxc4 bxc4 17 ♗xc4 ♕b4+ 18 ♘d2 ♕xd6 19 0-0! f5 20 ♖fd1 ♘d7 21 ♘e4 ♕g6 22 ♖d6 f6 23 ♗d5 ♖b8 24 ♘g3 White was better in M.Gurevich-Malishauskas, Lvov 1987) 13 ♕xb3 a6 14 ♘c5 and despite White's initiative the position is still unclear.

8 axb5 ♗xc3
9 ♗xc3

Also here White can sacrifice a pawn with 9 bxc3 cxb5, but after, for example, 10 ♘e5 ♘f6 11 ♕f3 ♕d5 12 ♕g3 0-0 13 f3 ♘bd7 his compensation remains on the speculative level.

9 ... cxb5
10 b3 ♗b7 *(D)*

W



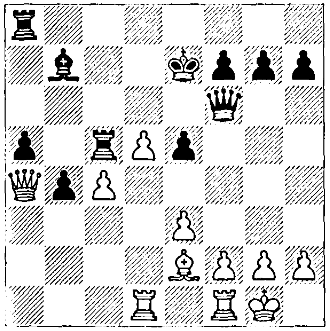
This is the first critical position.

11 bxc4

White has an even more aggressive and committal option in 11 d5!? ♘f6 12 bxc4 b4 13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 14 ♕a4+ ♘d7 15 ♘d4. Now:

1) 15...♔e7?! is extremely hazardous for Black: 16 d6+! ♔xd6 17 ♖d1 ♖hd8 18 c5+ ♘xc5 19 ♕b5 ♖dc8 20 ♘f5+ ♔e5 21 ♘d6 ♗d5 22 ♘xc8 ♖xc8. Now in V.Babula-Zurek, Pardubice 1996, White could have afforded 23 ♕xa5 ♕h4!? (23...♘e4? loses on the spot to 24 f4+ ♔f5 25 ♖xd5+!, while after 23...b3 24 ♕b4 ♔d6 25 ♗e2 the b-pawn is disarmed) 24 ♕a1+ ♔d6 25 ♗e2 ♘e4 26 g3 ♕f6 27 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 28 (±) with reasonable chances to convert the extra exchange into victory.

2) The right move is 15...e5 16 ♘b3 ♔e7 17 ♗e2 (17 ♕b5? is bad since after 17...♗a6 18 ♕xa5 ♖hb8 19 d6+ ♔e8! Black has a large lead in development and the threat of ...♗b7 is deadly) 17...♖hc8 (17...♕d6!? is also possible; after 18 ♖d1 ♖hc8 19 0-0 Black need not play 19...♘c5 20 ♘xc5 ♖xc5, which transposes to the main line of this note, and can instead simplify into a sterile endgame by 19...♘b6!? 20 ♕a1 ♘xc4 21 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 22 ♘xa5 ♖c3 23 ♕xb7 ♖xa1 24 ♘xd6 ♖xd1 25 ♘f5+ ♔f6 26 ♖xd1 ♔xf5, Nikčević-Tregubov, Cetinje 1996) 18 ♖d1 (both 18 ♘xa5? ♕b6 and 18 ♗g4 ♕d6 19 ♘xa5 ♖c5!? 20 ♘xb7 ♖xa4 21 ♖xa4 ♕g6!, Naumann-Stangl, Bundesliga 1996/7, favour Black) 18...♘c5 19 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 20 0-0 *(D)*.



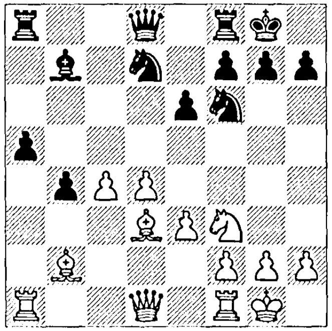
In this unbalanced situation White's only plan is an all-out attack against Black's king, while trying to keep the passed pawns at bay as long as possible. After 20...♕d6 (20...♖a6? 21 ♕c2! a4 22 f4 b3 23 ♕e4 ♔d6 24 ♕xh7 e4 25 ♕xe4 a3 26 ♕d3 b2 27 ♕b3 gave White a won position in Gelfand-Piket, Amsterdam VSB 1996; a playable alternative is 20...♔f8!? 21 f4 ♔f8) 21 ♕c2!? (after 21 f4 e4! 22 ♕a1 ♔f8 23 ♕e5 ♕xe5 24 fxe5 a4 25 e6 f6 Black's pawns are more dangerous) 21...g6 22 f4 the position remains unclear. Here the conflict between White's central strategy and Black's flank pawn-chain is even sharper than after the text-move, and strong novelties can tip the scales violently in the favour of either side.

11 ... b4
12 ♗b2 ♘f6
13 ♗d3 ♘bd7

Attempting to force exchanges by 13...♗e4?! costs Black precious time; moreover, the bishop plays an important role in supporting his pawns. After 14 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 15 ♕c2 ♘f6 16 e4 ♘fd7 17 0-0 0-0 18 c5 ♕c7 19 ♖fc1 ♖c8 20 ♕d2 ♖a6 21 h4 ♘f6 22 d5! ♘xe4 23 ♕d4 ♘f6 24 d6 ♕b7 25 ♘e5 ♘c6 26 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 27 g4! White had a strong attack in Knaak-Vera, East Berlin 1982.

14 0-0 0-0 *(D)*

W



15 ♖e1

Another important branching point. White has a mobile pawn-centre, supported by two active bishops, but will this outweigh the strength of Black's potentially dangerous queenside duo? White's first task is to set his e-pawn in motion without allowing Black an effective blockade by ...e5. The text-move is currently the most fashionable method of furthering this aim:

1) The old continuation is 15 ♕c2 ♕c7. Then 16 e4 e5 17 ♖fe1 ♖fe8 18 c5 exd4 19 ♗xd4 h6 20 e5 ♘d5 21 e6 ♖xe6 22 ♖xe6 fxe6 23 ♖e1 ♘f4 24 ♗e4 ♗xe4!? 25 ♕xe4 ♖a6 26 ♘e5 ♘d5 left White struggling for enough compensation to hold the balance in Umansky-Tregubov, Rowy 1999. Although both sides can deviate from this line more than once and attempts have been made to improve White's play with 16 c5 h6 17 e4, the consensus nowadays is that after 17...e5 18 ♖fc1 ♖fc8 19 dxe5 ♘h7 20 ♗d4 ♘hf8 or even 17...♗c6!? and ...a4, Black has little to fear.

2) Later interest shifted to 15 ♘d2!?. The idea is to play f4 first and advance the e-pawn

only after ...e5 has been prevented. Black can choose between:

2a) Letting White realize his plan is risky, but possible: 15...♕c7 16 f4 a4 17 ♖b1 (17 ♖c1!?) 17...♖fd8 18 ♕e2 b3 19 ♗a1 ♘b8! 20 f5 (20 e4 ♘c6 21 d5 ♘b4 gives White nothing concrete) 20...♘bd7 21 fxe6 fxe6 22 ♘f3 ♗e4 23 ♘g5 ♗xd3 24 ♕xd3 (Har-Zvi – Kantsler, Tel-Aviv Czerniak mem 1996) and now the relatively safe 24...♖e8!? would have been far from clear.

2b) 15...e5 16 ♖e1 ♕c7 17 ♘f1 ♖fe8 18 ♘g3!? (18 f3?! e4 19 ♗e2 exf3 20 gxf3 ♘h5 leaves White's kingside seriously weakened, Hoeksema-Van der Werf, Dutch Ch (Amsterdam) 1994) 18...a4 19 ♖b1 leads to a sharp position. Although the queenside pawns have moved forward, compared with line '1' White has managed to keep his centre flexible and it's not easy for Black to induce a premature pawn advance or achieve advantageous simplification. After 19...b3?! 20 ♗a3 g6 21 ♕d2 ♗a6 22 ♖ec1 h5 23 f3 ♕a7 24 ♕f2 White was better in P.Cramling-Gdanski, Österskärs 1995.

2c) Black can also play first 15...♖e8!? and profit from the fact that 16 f4? ♘c5 gives him full control of e4. However, 16 ♖e1 is stronger and will probably transpose to line '2b'.

15 ... ♘e4!?

Sometimes the simplest ideas take a long time to find. Krasenkow's move physically prevents e4. 15...♗e4?!, with the same intentions, is weaker for reasons outlined in the note to move 13. Black has tried other moves:

1) The stereotyped 15...♕c7? is weak now. After 16 e4 e5 17 c5! exd4 18 ♖c1 ♘e5 (Black loses material after 18...♘g4? 19 c6 ♗xc6 20 ♗b5 and ♘xd4 or 18...♖ac8? 19 c6! ♗xc6 20 e5 ♘d5 21 ♘xd4 ♘xe5 22 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 23 ♕h5) 19 c6! ♗a6 20 ♗xa6! ♘xf3+ (20...♖xa6 21 ♘xd4! ♘xc6 22 e5 ♘d7 23 e6 is no improvement for Black) 21 ♕xf3 ♖xa6 22 e5 ♘e8 23 ♗xd4 Black has no defence against ♗c5, Khuzman-Kutsin, Olomouc ECC 1996. All this clearly demonstrates that the rook is much more effective on the c-file than the queen after 15 ♕c2.

2) 15...♖e8 is somewhat less consistent than the text-move, but avoids the above disasters. Then 16 c5 (the complications after 16 e4 e5 17 c5 exd4 18 ♖c1 {or 18 ♗b5} are interesting, but inconclusive) 16...♗c6 (too passive i 16...♕c7 17 e4 h6 18 ♘d2!? e5 19 ♘c4 exd4 2 ♘d6 ♖e6 21 ♗xd4 and White is better, Ceb alo-De Kleuver, Saint Vincent 1998) 17 e4 (1 ♗c2 ♘e4 18 ♗a4 ♕c7 19 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 20 ♕a ♖ec8 21 ♖ec1 ♕xa4 22 ♖xa4 ♘dxc5! 23 dxc ♘xc5 is dangerous only for White) 17...a4 1 ♗c2 b3 19 ♗b1 ♕c7 20 ♘d2 ♖ed8 21 e5 ♘c 22 ♕h5 ♘f8 23 ♘c4 ♕b7 24 ♕h3 ♕b4 2 ♗d3 gives White attacking chances, but the po sition remains double-edged, Ig.Jelen-Pavaso vić, Slovenian Ch (Kranj) 1999.

16 ♘d2

Sadler wants to get rid of Black's centralize knight even by exchanging it, but simplificatio lessens his chances to fight for the initiativ White's main idea, which has been successfull used in some recent games, is the queensid blockade. After Black's pawns are reliabl stopped, White can turn his attention to the centre again. However, implementing this concep effectively is not so simple; e.g., 16 ♕c2 f5 1 c5 ♗d5 (after 17...♗c6 18 ♗c4 ♕e7 19 ♗b ♖a7 20 ♗a4 ♗xa4 21 ♖xa4 ♖fa8 22 ♖ea1 ♕c parrying Black's main threat ...♘df6-d5-c with the typical 23 ♘e1! would have retaine an advantage in Azmaiparashvili-Galkin, Sai Vincent Ech 2000) 18 ♗b5 ♕c7! (18...♖a7 19 ♖e2! ♕c7 20 ♘e1 ♖b8 21 ♗a4 b3 22 ♕c ♗c6 23 ♘d3 ♗xa4 24 ♖xa4 ♕c6 25 ♕c4 ♘c 26 ♖e1 ♘d5 27 ♖ea1 is the ideal position Whit is striving for, Ionov-Karasev, St Petersbu 1999) 19 ♖ec1 ♘df6 20 h3, as in Rogozenk Apicella, Bucharest Ciocaltea mem 2000, is n clear. 20...f4!? would then have given Blac counterplay.

The less tested 16 c5!? might well be an improvement. After 16...♗d5 (16...♗c6 17 ♕c f5 18 ♗c4 transposes to Azmaiparashvili-Galkin) 17 ♘d2 ♘xd2 18 ♕xd2 White has a bett version of the game continuation.

16 ... ♘xd2
17 ♕xd2 ♕c7
18 c5

Sadler comes up with a new move, which i certainly better than 18 e4? e5 19 ♖e3 exd4 2 ♗xd4 ♘e5, which gave Black an ideal positio in Ellers-Stangl, Bundesliga 1997/8.

18 ... f5

Now 18...e5?! isn't good any more, as aft 19 ♖ac1 White threatens c6.

19 f3

The direct 19 e4 immediately pinpoints ck's weakness on e6, but on the other hand b2-bishop can end up looking very silly ind. After 19...fxe4 (the tactical 19...♘f6 20 f5 ♘g4 21 g3 exf5 is insufficient due to 22 ♕e5!, when White is clearly better) 20 ♗xe4 ck has two options:

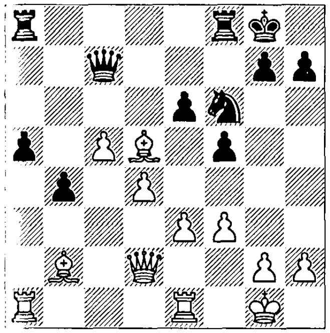
1) 20...♗xe4 is not too good: 21 ♖xe4 ♖a6 1...♘f6 22 ♖xe6 ♘g4 23 ♖d6 ♖xf2 24 ♕g5! n be dangerous only for Black; also after ...♕c6 22 ♖ae1 White's bishop is ready to e part in the game and Black must play ...e5, as 22...♖f6? 23 d5! exd5 24 ♖e7 ♖f7 25 f7 ♔xf7 26 ♕g5 gives White a decisive atk) 22 ♖ae1 e5 23 h3!? and White is better. will open the long diagonal at a suitable mont, and 23...exd4? is still impossible due to ♖c7.

2) 20...♗d5! is more to the point. White then nothing concrete, as after 21 ♗xd5 exd5 22 7 ♖ae8 23 ♕g5 ♖xe7 24 ♕xe7 ♕f4! 25 f3 6 Black threatens ...♖e8.

19 ... ♘f6
20 ♗c4

Now 20 e4?! is premature because of .fxe4 21 fxe4 ♘g4 22 g3 ♖f2 23 ♖e2 (Black learly better after 23 ♕g5 ♘e5!) 23...♖af8, en Black's pieces are dangerously swarm around White's king. The direct threat is xh2 and after 24 ♕g5 ♕f7! 25 ♕xg4 ♖f1+ ck wins the exchange with a continuing atk. However, a slow preparation of the central pansion by means of 20 h3!? deserves attenn.

20 ... ♗d5
21 ♗xd5 *(D)*



21 ... ♘xd5!

It would seem that 21...exd5 once and for all wins the battle for e4 and buries White's bishop. However, the position becomes too static and after 22 ♖a4 or even 22 ♕c2!? Black's pawns are firmly blockaded and will soon become an object of attack, while White's bishop can later find its way out via e1 and g3.

22 e4?!

Surprisingly enough, this natural move involves a rather high degree of risk. The immediate blockade 22 ♖a4 e5!? 23 dxe5 (23 ♖ea1 is weaker owing to 23...e4, and 23 e4 is met by 23...fxe4, when 24 fxe4?! ♘f4 breaks up White's centre, while after 24 ♖xe4 ♕c6 only Black can be better) 23...♕xc5 24 ♗d4 leads to a balanced and approximately equal position. The patient and flexible 22 ♕c2!?, intending to meet 22...♕c6 with 23 ♕a4, gives White some chances to fight for an edge.

22 ... fxe4
23 fxe4 ♘f6
24 h3?

This inconsistent move loses time and decidedly tips the balance in Black's favour. 24 d5? is even worse in view of 24...♘g4 (rather than 24...♕xc5+?! 25 ♗d4). White should have, come what may, played the principled 24 ♖ac1! ♘g4 (otherwise d5 is coming) 25 g3 ♖f2, and now:

1) 26 ♕d1 (26 ♕g5? is weak due to 26...h5! 27 ♕xh5 ♘f6) 26...♖xh2!? (after 26...♖xb2 27 ♕xg4 ♕c6 28 ♖f1 a4 29 ♕f4 h6 30 d5! White's pawns are as far advanced as Black's and a draw is the likely outcome) 27 ♕xg4 ♖xb2 28 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 29 ♕d6 ♕c8! and the vulnerability of White's king gives Black a lead in the ensuing pawn race. After 30 ♖b1 ♖c2 31 ♖bc1 (31 ♖f1 loses to 31...h6 32 ♖f5 a4 33 ♖xb4 a3 34 ♖b1 a2 35 ♖a1 ♕b7 36 ♕d5 ♕b2! 37 ♕xa8+ ♔h7) 31...♖xc1 32 ♖xc1 a4 33 c6 b3 34 c7 a3 35 ♕b6 a2 36 ♖a1 ♕xc7! 37 ♕xb3 ♖b8 Black should win.

2) Safer and better is 26 ♖e2 ♖af8. Here ...♘xh2 is not such a strong threat as above, and White even has a choice:

2a) 27 c6 ♘xh2 28 ♖xf2 ♕xg3+ 29 ♔h1!? (29 ♖g2 ♘f3+ 30 ♔h1 is also a draw, as in line '2b') 29...♖xf2 30 ♕xf2 ♕xf2 31 c7 and Black has no more than a perpetual.

2b) The same goes for 27 d5!? ♘xh2 28 ♖xf2 ♕xg3+ 29 ♖g2 ♘f3+ 30 ♔h1 ♕h4+ 31

♖h2 ♕xe4 32 ♕e2! (32 ♕g2? loses nicely to 32...♘e1!) 32...♘e1+! 33 ♔g1 (or 33 ♖g2 ♕h4+ 34 ♖h2 ♕e4+) 33...♘f3+.

24 ... ♕c6

25 ♕d3

This costs time, but it's not easy to suggest a substantial improvement. 25 d5 ♕xc5+ (after 25...exd5? 26 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 27 ♕xd5+ and ♖eb1 Black can't retain his pawns without taking on d5) 26 ♗d4 ♕b5! (26...♕e7 is weaker since after 27 d6!, White's active bishop and strong passed pawn give him compensation) 27 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 28 e5 ♖f5 is a line given by Krasenkow; after 29 dxe6 ♖xe5 30 ♖xe5 (30 ♕f2 is no better due to 30...♖f5!?) 30...♕xe5 31 ♖e1 ♕c3 Black's winning chances are very real.

25 ... a4

26 d5

Now White can't hesitate any more.

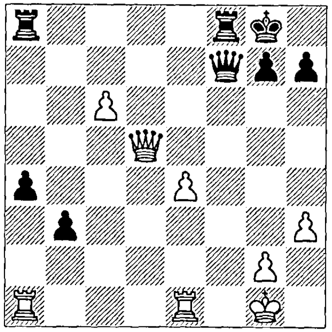
26 ... exd5!?

Here Black's pawns are further advanced and 26...♕xc5+ 27 ♗d4 ♕e7 (27...♕c8 28 ♖ac1 ♕d7 29 ♕g3 gives White more play) 28 d6 ♕d7 deserves more attention than above. However, the text-move is safe, more practical and can be described as winning by force despite the fact that White later misses a chance to offer tougher resistance.

27 ♗xf6 ♕xf6

28 ♕xd5+ ♕f7

29 c6 b3 *(D)*



30 c7?!

This seals White's fate. 30 ♖f1 ♕xd5 31 exd5 b2 32 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 33 ♖f1+ ♔e7 clearly shows that Black's tandem is much stronger than White's, while the attempt to blockade it with 30 ♖a3 ♖fd8 31 ♕c5 ♕a7!? (Black must beware of tactics such as 31...♖d2? 32 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 33 c7) leads to a lost endgame.

However, the passive 30 ♖eb1 is considerably more resilient. Then Black still faces quite a difficult task:

1) 30...♖fd8 and now:

1a) After 31 ♕c5?! (31 ♕xf7+? ♔xf7 32 ♖a3 ♔e6 only helps Black) 31...♕a7 (Black can also play the patient 31...h6!?, intending to encircle the c6-pawn gradually with ...♖dc8 and ...♖a6) 32 ♕xa7 ♖xa7 33 c7 ♖xc7 34 ♖xa4 ♖b8 the endgame is dreary for White.

1b) However, 31 ♕b5! is much stronger. After 31...♕a7+ (the tactical justification behind White's move is 31...♖db8? 32 ♖xa4 and 31...♖d2? 32 ♕xb3!) 32 ♔h1 ♕d4 (32...♖db8 33 ♕c4+ ♔h8 34 c7 ♖c8 35 ♖xb3 axb3 36 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 37 ♕xb3 ♖axc7 38 ♕e6 gives White an easy draw) 33 c7 ♖dc8 34 ♕c6 ♕b4 (34...b2 is worse due to 35 ♖xb2! ♕xb2 36 ♖xa4) 35 ♖d1 b2 36 ♕d5+! ♔h8 37 ♕xa8 ♖xa8 38 ♖d8+ ♕f8 39 ♖ad1! Black is forced to extricate himself with a perpetual after 39...h6 40 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 41 ♖d8+ ♔h7 42 ♖xa8 b1♕+ 43 ♔h2 ♕xe4 44 c8♕ ♕c5+.

2) After 30...♖fc8 31 ♖a3! (the tempting 31 c7? ♕xd5 32 exd5 ♖xc7 33 ♖xb3 ♖c1+! 34 ♖xc1 axb3 leads to a lost endgame for White; the main point is that the exchange of rooks 35 ♖b1 ♖b8 36 ♔f2 b2! 37 ♔e3 ♔f7 38 ♔d4 ♔e7 39 ♔c3 ♔d6 40 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 41 ♔xb2 ♔xd5 42 ♔c3 ♔e4 43 ♔d2 ♔f4 44 ♔e2 ♔g3 45 ♔f1 ♔h2 46 ♔f2 g5 47 ♔f3 h5 leads to a win for Black due to zugzwang) 31...h6 (31...♖d8 32 ♕b5 is similar to line '1b') 32 ♖f1 ♕xd5 33 exd5 White wants to play ♖fa1 and ♔f2, preparing ♖xa4, and 33...♖a5 34 ♖b1 leads only to the mutual annihilation of the passed pawns.

3) The lines above indicate that Black sorely needs some *luft*, so 30...h6! is best:

3a) 31 ♖a3 ♖fd8 32 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 33 ♖ba1 (White tries to avoid the lost rook endgame after 33 c7 ♖dc8 34 ♔f2 ♖xc7 35 ♖bxb3 axb3 36 ♖xa8 ♖b7) 33...♖d2!? 34 c7 ♖c8 35 ♖xa4 ♖xc7 36 ♔h2 b2 37 ♖f1+ ♔e6 38 ♖b4 ♖cc2 39 ♖g1 ♔e5 and, with ...♖c1 always in the air, White is practically paralysed.

3b) Therefore White should prevent ...♖fd8 with 31 c7!? ♖fc8 32 ♖a3 ♕xd5 33 exd5 ♔f7 (now 33...♖xc7 34 ♖bxb3 gets Black nowhere as White's rook gets behind the b-pawn) 34 d6 ♔e6 35 ♖d1 ♔d7 36 ♔f2 (36 ♖d4 is useless in view of 36...♖a6; the a4-pawn is taboo anyway). Black's advantage in this endgame is due to the fact he can use both his rooks actively while White's a3-rook is passive. On the other hand, it's not so easy to prevent White from reaching a rook or a double-rook endgame where an extra pawn on the queenside still doesn't guarantee a win:

3b1) 36...♖a6 37 ♔e3 ♖xd6 (after 37...♖e8+? 38 ♔f3 ♖xd6 39 ♖xd6+ ♔xd6 40 ♖xa4 ♔xc7 41 ♖c4+ Black loses the b-pawn, while 37...b2 38 ♖b1 ♖e8+ 39 ♔f3 ♔xd6 40 ♖xb2 ♔xc7 41 ♖b4 gives White excellent drawing chances) 38 ♖xd6+ ♔xd6 39 ♖xa4 ♖xc7 (39...♔xc7 40 ♖c4+ ♔d7 41 ♖b4 is similar) 40 ♖b4 ♖c3+ 41 ♔d4 ♖g3 42 ♖b6+ ♔c7 43 ♖b5 ♔c6 44 ♔c4 ♔d6 (44...g5? allows 45 ♖xb3! ♖xb3 46 ♔xb3, drawing, as Black can't force the zugzwang from line '2') 45 ♔d4. Black has winning prospects, but the game is still far from over.

3b2) Much better is the refined 36...♖f8+! 37 ♔g3 (after 37 ♔e3?! ♖f6 38 ♖d4 b2! 39 ♖b4 ♖e8+ 40 ♔d2 ♖xd6+ 41 ♔c3 ♖e2 42 ♖axa4 (42 ♖c4? b1♘+} 42...♖c6+ 43 ♔d3 ♖xg2 Black is winning) 37...♖a6 (Black makes no progress after 37...♖f6 38 ♖c1, while 37...g5 38 ♖da1 ♔xd6 39 ♖xa4 ♔xc7 40 ♖c4+ leads to the type of endgame Black wants to avoid). Black intends to prepare ...♖xd6 with ...♖fa8 or ...♖c8, while keeping White's king too far from the queenside compared with line '3b1'. One important line, 38 ♖d4 (38 ♖b1 ♔xd6 39 ♖bxb3 axb3 40 ♖xa6+ ♔xc7 and White's rook is misplaced) 38...♖b6! (38...♖fa8?! is insufficient in view of 39 ♖c4) 39 ♖dxa4 b2 40 ♖a8 b1♕ 41 ♖xf8 ♕g6+ 42 ♔f3 ♕h5+ 43 ♔g3 ♕e5+ 44 ♔f3 ♕d5+, doesn't work for White.

30 ... ♖fc8

31 ♖ac1

31 ♖eb1 ♕xd5 32 exd5 ♔f7 33 d6 ♔e6 34 ♖d1 ♔d7 35 ♖a3 ♖a6 36 ♔f2 ♖xd6 37 ♖xd6+ ♔xd6 38 ♖xa4 ♖xc7 39 ♖b4 ♖c2+ doesn't help White, since Black has an extra tempo compared with note '3b1' to White's 30th move and gets his pawn to b2, winning easily.

31 ... b2!

Black temporarily sacrifices a rook to force through his pawns. The rest is silence.

32 ♕xa8 ♖xa8

33 c8♕+ ♖xc8

34 ♖xc8+ ♕f8

35 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8

36 ♖b1 a3

37 ♔f2 ♔e7

38 ♔e3 a2

39 ♖xb2 a1♕

0-1

Summary

The sharp fight between central and flank strategies is what makes the Noteboom/Abrahams Variation currently so popular. We can see a similar conflict in Game 15, but with a few notable differences. Here White is the side with both the central preponderance and potential attacking chances, but on the other hand they are not so marked as in Shirov-Leko as Black's kingside is not weakened. Also, Black's a- and b-pawns are already passed and advanced, so they require more attention. Suitable exchanges (the notes indicate the exceptions) can only enhance their strength. At the time the game was played, 15...♘e4!? was a relatively fresh idea; Krasenkow's following play was a model of central restraint strategy (18...f5, 21...♘xd5!?).

White's task in this line is a mirror image of Black's aims: he must also divide his attention between the queenside and the centre. The notes show that the knight is an important piece both for the blockade (♘b3) and later for the support of the central pawns (♘b3-d2-c4-b6 and f3, e4, d5 being the ultimate goal). Thus 16 ♘d2 eased Black's defensive task. Sadler's defeat in the game was caused by his dubious choices between restraint and activity at the critical moments. The main culprit was definitely 24 h3?, but also 22 ♕c2!? and even 30 ♖eb1 would have been stronger than the moves actually played. In comparison, Krasenkow played extremely consistently to remove any obstacles from the path of his pawns. After 11...b4 it took all of 14 moves before they could step forward again, but once he had forced the exchange of White's bishop (26...exd5!?) they became the dominant, and after 30 c7?! quickly the decisive, factor. Even after the correct 30 ♖eb1, the notes (line '3b2') show that Black has one distinct advantage: his more active king.

Game 42

Judit Polgar – Michael Adams

Dos Hermanas 1999

Ruy Lopez (Spanish), Marshall Attack [C89]

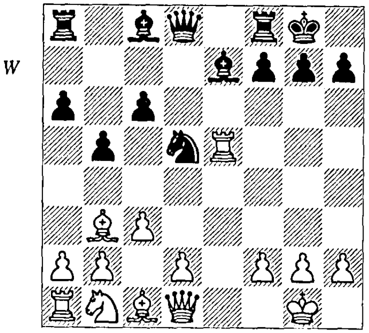
1 e4 e5
2 ♘f3 ♘c6
3 ♗b5 a6
4 ♗a4 ♘f6
5 0-0 ♗e7
6 ♖e1 b5
7 ♗b3 0-0
8 c3

Polgar is in a fighting mood and invites the Marshall Attack. There is more than one method to avoid this controversial gambit (8 a4, 8 d3), while Adams himself somewhat earlier faced 8 h3!? against Kasparov in Linares 1999 and solved the opening problems satisfactorily.

8 ... d5!

Although it has been around since 1918, this pawn sacrifice is still very much alive even today. The exclamation mark originates indirectly from Kasparov, who has so far never (!) allowed the Marshall Attack.

9 exd5 ♘xd5
10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5
11 ♖xe5 c6 *(D)*



Marshall's original idea 11...♘f6 hasn't survived the test of time; after 12 d4 ♗d6 13 ♖e1 ♘g4 14 h3 ♕h4 15 ♕f3 ♘xf2 16 ♗d2! Black doesn't have a satisfactory follow-up. However, from the 1940s onwards it has been successfully replaced by the positional continuation in the text. Black's lead in development and good piece coordination are compensating factors which he often retains deep into the middlegame.

12 d3

This is nowadays the most topical continuation. It has its pluses compared with 12 d4, the former main line: White controls the e4-square, and d4 can be used by one of his pieces in the future. Also c4, dislodging the centralized black knight, becomes an option, especially if Black plays ...f5 later on. However, the declining popularity of 12 d4 was also caused by the fact that after 12...♗d6 13 ♖e1 ♕h4 14 g3 ♕h3 15 ♗e3 (15 ♖e4 g5! was played in the most recent high-calibre game in this line, Topalov-Adams, Sarajevo 2000; White didn't enrich the theory substantially and went on to lose the game) 15...♗g4 16 ♕d3 ♖ae8 17 ♘d2 ♖e6 18 a4 ♕h5! 19 axb5 axb5 it's not clear how White can get any advantage. After 20 ♘e4 (20 ♘f1 ♗f5!? 21 ♕d2 ♖fe8 22 ♗d1 ♕g6 23 ♗f3 h5 24 ♕d1 h4 gives Black enough play on the light squares and the e-file, Kruppa-Ginsburg, Ukrainian Ch (Simferopol) 1990) 20...♗f5! 21 ♗d2 ♖xe4 22 ♖xe4 ♘f6 23 f3 ♕g6! Black intends ...♗xg3 and he will either regain his pawn or draw immediately, Svidler-Kamsky, Groningen 1995.

12 ... ♗d6
13 ♖e1 ♕h4

13...♗f5 allows White to return the pawn and retain a comfortable and safe edge after 14 ♕f3 ♕d7 15 ♗xd5 cxd5 16 ♗f4!? ♗xf4 17 ♕xf4 ♗xd3 18 ♘d2.

14 g3 ♕h3
15 ♖e4

White prevents ...♗g4 and wants to harass Black's annoying queen. Another benefit of 12 d3 is that now 15...g5?, as in the analogous line in the note to White's 12th move, is impossible.

15 ... ♕f5

Adams has extensive experience with this line and chooses the move that still has the best reputation nowadays. The older 15...♘f6 brought n disappointment after 16 ♖h4 ♕f5 17 ♘d2! ♗c2 ♕g6 18 ♘d2 ♗g4 19 ♘f3 ♖fe8 20 2 ♘d5 21 d4 ♗f5 22 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 gave Black ugh for the pawn in Leko-Adams, Madrid 98, since White's h4-rook is misplaced; the ne goes for 17 ♗f4 ♗e7! 18 d4 h6) 17...g5 ♖h6! ♘g4 19 ♘e4 ♘xh6 20 ♘xd6 ♕g6 21 ♘g4 (after 21...♗f5!? 22 ♘xg5 {or even f3!?} 22...♗xd3 23 ♘f3 White has a lot of y for the exchange) 22 ♗xg5 ♗f5 23 ♗f4 d8 24 ♕e2 ♖fe8 25 ♖e1 ♔g7 26 f3 ♘e5 27 2 c5 28 ♕e3 in Svidler-Adams, Elista OL 98. Although this subvariation is not fully ar and Timman repeated it with success ainst Ivanchuk in Wijk an Zee 1999 (where hite deviated with the weaker 18 ♖d4?!), the aracter of the struggle, when White himself ests the initiative for a minor material investnt, is not to appealing to a true Marshall afinado. The same goes for 15...♕d7 16 ♘d2 h7 17 ♖e1 c5 18 ♘e4 ♗e7 19 a4 b4 20 ♗g5 g5 21 ♘xg5 bxc3 22 bxc3 ♖ad8 23 ♘e4 6 24 ♕h5 ♘xc3 25 ♕xc5 ♖xd3 26 ♗c4 c5 27 ♘xc5 ♖d4 28 ♗f1 ♗c8 29 ♖a3 ♘d5 a5!, and here for a change it is Black who s to defend a slightly worse endgame, J.Polr-Adams, Tilburg 1997.

16 ♘d2

16 ♗c2 ♕g6 (16...♕d7!?) 17 d4 ♗f5 18 ♖e2 c8 resembles the 12 d4 lines and highlights positional ideas of the Marshall, such as ht-square control and long-term piece activ. It's not easy for White to neutralize Black's itiative and make his extra pawn tell, even dete simplification.

16 ... ♕g6

16...♘f6?! 17 ♖e1 ♕xd3 18 ♘e4 ♕xd1 19 f6+ gxf6 20 ♖xd1 is definitely not the way Black to regain material, as he would then saddled with weak pawns in a depressing dgame.

17 ♖e1

White's exposed rook retreats and frees e4 the knight. Practice has shown that the textve is a better antidote against ...♗f5 or ...f5than 17 a4 or 17 ♘f1.

17 ... f5

Again best by test. 17...♗g4 18 f3 ♗h3 19 4 ♖ae8 20 ♖e2 h5 21 ♗g5 ♗c7 22 ♕d2 h8 23 ♖ae1 f6 24 ♘f2! ♖xe2 25 ♖xe2 ♗f5 26 d5 cxd5 27 ♗f4 ♗xf4 28 ♕xf4 ♗xd3 29 ♖d2 led, in Anand-Adams, Groningen FIDE KO 1997, to exactly the unfavourable type of position that was mentioned in the note to Black's 13th move.

18 ♕f3

Finally White comes up with a novelty, but it proves harmless. Therefore, it is worthwhile to look at the alternatives:

1) 18 ♘f3 f4 19 ♘e5 ♗xe5 20 ♖xe5 fxg3 21 hxg3 ♗g4 22 ♕e1 ♗f3 23 ♗d2 ♖ae8, Leko-Svidler, Dortmund 1998, and now 24 c4! is the only way to curb Black's initiative.

2) The absolute elite continue, with good reason, to avoid the ultra-sharp 18 c4 f4 19 ♘e4 (White can't afford 19 cxd5? fxg3 20 fxg3 ♗xg3) 19...fxg3 20 fxg3 ♗g4 21 ♕c2 bxc4 22 dxc4, and now:

2a) 22...♗b4? 23 ♗d2 ♘f4 (otherwise White has a healthy extra pawn) 24 ♗xf4 ♗xe1 25 ♖xe1 ♗f5 and here in Smagin-Hebden, Moscow 1986, White could have played 26 c5+ ♔h8 27 ♗e5!, with the point 27...♖ae8 28 ♕c3, when the material advantage decides.

2b) Necessary is the aggressive 22...♖ae8! 23 cxd5 ♗f3 24 dxc6+ ♔h8 25 ♗d5 ♗xg3 26 hxg3 ♖xe4 (26...♗xe4? 27 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 28 ♗xe4 ♕xg3+ 29 ♕g2 ♕e1+ 30 ♔h2 ♖f2 31 ♗f3! ♕e5+ 32 ♔h3 is extremely good for White) 27 ♗f4 ♖xe1+ (27...♖fxf4? 28 ♕f2 gets Black nowhere) 28 ♖xe1 ♕xc2 29 ♗xf3 ♕xb2 30 c7. Although the c-pawn is very strong, it's difficult to see how White can win a whole rook for it after 30...h5. White's best is to strive for a draw with 31 ♗xh5 (weaker is 31 ♖e2 ♕c3 32 ♗b7 ♕b4!?); e.g., 31...♖c8 32 ♗g4 ♖xc7 33 ♗xc7 ♕d4+ 34 ♔g2.

3) The trendy continuation is 18 a4 ♖b8 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♘e4!? fxe4 21 dxe4 ♗g4 22 ♕d4 ♗f3! (the point of opening the a-file is that 22...♖be8? loses to 23 ♖a6!) 23 exd5 c5 24 ♕h4 ♖be8 and now:

3a) 25 ♗d2 ♗e4 26 ♖e2 ♕f5 27 ♗f4 c4 28 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 29 ♗c2 ♗xf4 30 ♗xe4 ♕xe4 31 gxf4 led to a draw in Anand-Khalifman, New Delhi FIDE KO 2000. After 31...♖f6 White must give a perpetual.

3b) 25 ♗e3 was played in Anand-Adams, Dortmund 2000. Now, according to Anand, Black should play 25...♖e5! 26 ♕h3 c4 27 ♗d1 ♗xd5 28 ♖a6 ♕e4 29 f3 ♖xf3 30 ♗xf3 ♕xf3 31 ♖xd6 ♕h1+ with a draw.

4) Arguably White's best chance to get an advantage out of the opening is 18 f4!? ♗xf4 19 ♕f3 ♗b8 20 ♗xd5+ cxd5 21 ♘b3! (21 ♕xd5+?! ♔h8 is risky for White, as after 22 ♕xa8 ♕b6+ Black wins the queen) 21...♕f7 (White's idea works tactically due to the line 21...f4 22 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 23 ♕xa8 ♕b6+ 24 ♗e3! fxe3 25 ♕e4 ♗b7 26 ♕xe3 ♕c6 27 ♕e4 ♕b6+ 28 ♕d4! ♕c6 29 ♖e4). Now 22 ♘d4?! ♗a7 23 ♗f4 ♗d7 24 ♖e5 b4 gave Black enough counterplay in Leko-Adams, Linares 1999, but this would be harder to achieve after 22 ♗f4!? ♗a7+ 23 d4.

18 ... ♔h8

A logical side-step; after 18...f4? 19 ♗xd5+ cxd5 20 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 21 ♘e4! White parries the threats.

19 ♗d1

Now 19 ♗xd5?! is very risky for White due to 19...cxd5 20 ♕xd5 ♖b8 (or even 20...♖a7!?), as the long diagonal is one gaping hole and White has yet to activate his queenside pieces.

19 ... f4

Black must act immediately, since after, for example, 19...♗d7?! 20 ♕h5 ♖ae8 (20...♕f6 21 ♘f3 also gets Black nowhere) 21 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 22 ♕xg6 ♖e1+ 23 ♘f1 hxg6 24 ♗d2 his compensation dissipates.

20 g4

After 20 ♕h5 fxg3 21 fxg3 ♗xg3! 22 ♕xg6 ♗f2+ 23 ♔h1 hxg6 White still has a lot of catching up in development to do.

20 ... h5

Having been confronted with a new idea in the opening, Black refrains from unclear all-out sacrificial alternatives such as 20...♘f6 21 h3 ♗f5 22 ♕xc6 ♖ad8 23 d4 h5.

21 h3 ♘f6! *(D)*

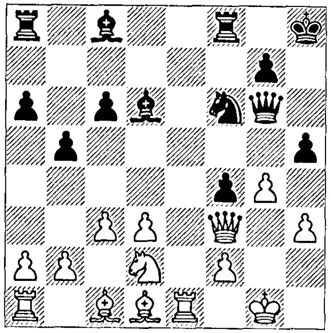
Ruthlessly going after White's king. This is the right move-order, since after 21...hxg4? 22 hxg4 ♘f6 White has the disruptive 23 ♕h3+.

22 ♕g2!

Polgar is not tempted by the materialistic 22 ♕xc6 hxg4, and now:

1) 23 ♕xa8? f3 24 h4 ♗f5 is exceedingly hazardous for White:

1a) 25 ♕a7 ♗xd3! 26 ♕d4 (26 ♖e6 g3 27 ♖xd6 gxf2++ 28 ♔xf2 ♘g4+ 29 ♔g3 ♕xd6+ 30 ♔xg4 ♕f4+ mates) 26...g3 27 ♔h1 (27 ♗xf3 loses to 27...gxf2++ 28 ♔xf2 ♗g3+ 29 ♔e3 ♖e8+) 27...♕f5! 28 ♘xf3 ♕h3+ 29 ♔g1 g2 forces mate.



1b) Even the more natural 25 ♕c6 g3 26 ♕xf3 (26 ♕xd6? gxf2++ 27 ♔xf2 ♘g4+) 26...gxf2++ 27 ♔xf2 ♗xd3! is grim for White, as the threats ...♘g4+ and ...♗c5+ are impossible to meet.

2) White should curb his greed with 23 hxg4 ♗xg4 24 ♕g2 ♖ae8!? (24...♕h5?! 25 ♕h1 ♗xd1 26 ♖xd1 and 24...♕f5 25 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 26 ♘f3 ♖ae8 27 ♗d2 are less convincing for Black), but Black's initiative remains dangerous.

2a) 25 ♖f1 ♕f5!? 26 ♗xg4 (26 ♘e4 f3 27 ♕h1+ ♗h3 28 ♗xf3 ♘xe4 29 ♗xe4 ♕g4+ 30 ♗g2 ♖f3! leaves White paralysed) 26...♘xg4 27 ♘e4 ♖e6 gives Black a strong attack.

2b) 25 ♘e4 ♕h5 26 ♕h1 (26 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 27 f3 ♘e5 28 ♖f1 ♖e6 is also unpleasant for White) 26...♕xh1+ 27 ♔xh1 ♘xe4 28 dxe4 f3 and White's king still remains a major problem despite the exchange of queens.

22 ... hxg4

23 hxg4 ♗xg4

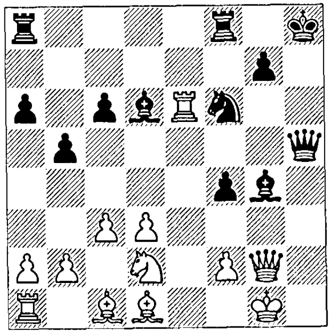
Although this move involves a piece sacrifice, it is stronger than 23...♘xg4, when after 24 f3 Black can't avoid the endgame. After 24...♘e5 (24...♕xd3? 25 fxg4 ♗c5+ 26 ♔h1 gets Black nowhere) 25 ♕xg6 (25 d4 ♕h5!? 26 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 27 dxe5 ♗h3 is far from clear) 25...♘xg6 26 ♘e4 White quickly gets his pieces out and can claim some advantage.

24 ♖e6

Now Black doesn't have to fear 24 f3 ♖ae8 25 ♘e4 ♗f5. The text-move gives rise to wild complications.

24 ... ♕h5! *(D)*

The only move, as after both 24...♖ae8? 25 ♗xg4 and 24...♖ad8 25 ♘e4! Black loses material with nothing to show for it.



25 ♗xg4

A bishop on f3 would be stronger than the knight later on. 25 ♖xf6? loses by force after 25...♗xd1 26 ♖xd6 ♖ae8 27 ♘e4 (27 ♕h2 ♖e1+ 28 ♔g2 f3+ 29 ♔g3 ♖g1+! mates; the same goes for 27 ♘f1 ♗f3 28 ♕h2 ♕xh2+! 29 ♔xh2 ♖e1 30 ♘g3 fxg3+ 31 ♔xg3 ♖g1+ 32 ♔h2 ♖f5!) 27...♗f3 28 ♕h2 ♖e5! 29 ♕xh5+ (29 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 30 ♕xh5+ ♖xh5 31 ♘g3 ♖fh4!) 29...♖xh5 30 ♘g3 fxg3 31 fxg3 ♗d5.

25 ... ♘xg4

26 ♖xd6!?

Polgar, with 1½/5 in the tournament, badly wanted to win and so ignored the approximately equal 26 ♕h1 ♕xh1+ 27 ♔xh1 ♖f6.

26 ... ♖ae8

27 ♘e4

White certainly can't allow a back-rank invasion:

1) 27 ♘f1? ♖e1 28 ♖d4 (28 f3 loses on the spot to 28...♘h2! 29 ♗xf4 ♘xf3+) 28...♖xf1+! 29 ♔xf1 ♘h2+ 30 ♔g1 ♘f3+ 31 ♔f1 ♘xd4 is hopeless for White.

2) 27 ♘f3 is a serious alternative to the text-move:

2a) 27...♘e5 28 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 29 ♗xf4!? (after 29 ♕h2 ♖g5+ 30 ♔h1 ♕xh2+ 31 ♔xh2 ♔h7, 32 ♔h1! is the only way to meet ...♖h8, but 32...♖ff5 33 ♖xc6 ♖g4 34 ♗xf4 ♖gxf4 leads anyway to a position where White's king is too exposed to give him winning chances) 29...♖xf4 30 ♖g6 ♖xf2 31 ♔xf2 ♖e2+ 32 ♔g1 ♖xg2+ 33 ♖xg2 gives White a slight but safe edge.

2b) 27...♖e2 is more testing:

2b1) 28 ♗d2?! ♖xf2 29 ♕xf2 ♘xf2 30 ♔xf2 g5 31 ♖e1 (after 31 c4 g4 32 ♗c3+ ♔g8 White's knight is taboo, but ...♖e8 is a serious threat and the passed pawns are dangerous) 31...♕h3! (31...g4?! is worse due to 32 ♖ee6) is very risky for White; e.g., 32 ♖g1 g4 33 ♘e5 g3+ 34 ♔f3 g2+ 35 ♔e4 ♕h1! 36 ♘f3 ♕h7+ 37 ♔d4 ♕a7+ wins a rook or mates.

2b2) More prudent is 28 ♕h1 ♕xh1+ 29 ♔xh1 ♘xf2+! (29...♖xf2 30 ♖g6! favours White) 30 ♔g2 (30 ♔g1 ♘h3+ 31 ♔h1 gives Black at least a perpetual and perhaps he can even strive for more with 31...♖f5!?) 30...♘e4+ 31 ♔f1 ♘g3+ 32 ♔g1 ♖f5 33 ♗xf4 (33 ♘d4? loses to 33...f3) 33...♖xf4 34 ♘g5. Black is only slightly better and a draw is the most probable result.

27 ... ♘e5

28 f3?

Again in same spirit as 26 ♖xd6!?, but now by chasing the elusive win White oversteps the margin of acceptable risk. The modest 28 ♗d2 (the threat was ...♘f3+ followed by ...♘h4, and 28 ♘d2? runs into 28...♘f7!) 28...♘f3+ 29 ♔f1 was necessary. Although Black can postpone the perpetual (29...♘h2+), he can hardly improve his position, so a draw is the most likely result. The ambitious 29...♘xd2+ 30 ♘xd2 f3! (not 30...♕e2+?, when 31 ♔g1 ♕xd2 32 ♖d7 turns the tables) 31 ♘xf3 ♖xf3 32 ♔g1 (32 ♖xc6? loses to 32...♖e2!, and 32 ♖d7 ♖xf2+! 33 ♕xf2 ♕h3+ is more pleasant for Black) 32...♖e5 (32...♖f6?! 33 ♖xc6! gets Black nowhere) 33 ♖g6 ♖xd3 (33...♖ff5 is weaker due to 34 ♖g3) 34 ♕xc6 ♔h7 35 ♖g3 ♖xg3+ 36 fxg3 ♖e2 37 ♕h1 leads to an endgame where Black's minimal edge is insufficient to win.

28 ... ♘xf3+

29 ♔f2 ♘h4

30 ♕h1

A sad retreat, but the alternatives are even less attractive:

1) 30 ♕h3 costs White an important tempo: 30...g5 and ...g4.

2) 30 ♕g1? ♕f3+ 31 ♔e1 ♘f5 32 ♖d7 ♘g3 and the attack triumphs.

3) 30 ♕g5 ♕f3+ 31 ♔g1 (after 31 ♔e1 the most convincing is 31...♕h1+ 32 ♔f2 ♕h2+ 33 ♔f1 ♘f5! and ...♘e3+) 31...♖e5! 32 ♕xh4+ (32 ♖h6+ loses outright to 32...♔g8! 33 ♕xh4 gxh6) 32...♖h5 33 ♖d8 (33 ♕xh5+ ♕xh5 34 ♗d2 f3 35 ♘f2 ♖f6! 36 ♖xf6 gxf6 and ...♕g6+ decides) 33...♕d1+ 34 ♔f2 ♖xh4 35 ♖xf8+

♔h7 36 ♘g5+ ♔g6 37 ♘f3 ♖h1 38 ♖xf4 ♕c2+ 39 ♔g3 ♖xc1 costs White a piece and the game.

30 ... g5

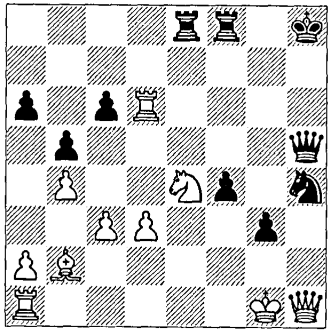
31 b4

Polgar finally gets to develop her sleeping queenside. Weaker was 31 ♗d2 g4 32 ♖g1 g3+ 33 ♔f1 (33 ♔e1 g2! and ...♘f3+ wins the queen) 33...♖f6! (33...♖e6, with the same idea, allows 34 ♗e1 with a semblance of a defence) 34 ♖d7 (34 ♖xf6 ♕d1+ 35 ♗e1 ♕xd3#) 34...♖h6 35 ♗e1 (Black was threatening ...♕d1+ and ...f3 as the knight is protected) 35...♕g4 36 ♖a7 (36 ♖d4 ♘f5) 36...♕d1 and Black wins. 31 b3!? is very similar to the text-move, but excludes the possibility of ...bxc4 later on.

31 ... g4

32 ♗b2 g3+

33 ♔g1 *(D)*



33 ... ♘f3+

Black's pawns are still stopped. 33...g2? 34 c4+ ♔h7 35 ♖d7+ (or 35 ♕h3!?) is ridiculous for Black, while 33...f3?! 34 c4+ ♔g8 35 ♖d7! (35 ♘xg3? ♕g5 36 ♕h3 ♖e1+ 37 ♖xe1 f2+ 38 ♔f1 fxe1♕++ 39 ♔xe1 ♘f3+ 40 ♔f1 ♘d4+ and Black's attack becomes decisive) 35...♖e5 36 ♘xg3 ♖g5 37 ♕h3 f2+ 38 ♔f1 ♕g4 39 ♕xg4 ♖xg4 40 ♗e5 ♘f5 (no better is 40...♘f3 41 ♗d6) 41 ♘e4!? ♘e3+ 42 ♔e2 leads to a miserable endgame for him.

34 ♔g2

The endgame after 34 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 35 c4+ ♔g8 (35...♖f6!? 36 ♗xf6+ ♔g8 37 ♗d4 ♕e2 is sharper, but also good for Black) 36 ♖g6+ ♔h7 37 ♘g5+ ♔xg6 38 ♘xf3 ♖e3 39 ♖f1 ♔h5 is untenable for White.

34 ... ♘h2

Adams rightly spurns the draw.

35 c4+ ♔g8

36 ♕d1?!

White buckles under the tension. Since th move loses in straightforward fashion, 36 ♔g1 was absolutely imperative:

1) Not 36...f3?, when 37 ♘xg3 f2+ 38 ♔ f1♕+ (38...♖e2 is nothing in view of 39 ♖f1 39 ♕xf1! (39 ♖xf1? loses to 39...♖e2+! 40 ♘xe2 ♕xe2+ 41 ♔h3 ♕h5+! 42 ♔g2 ♖xf1 39...♖xf1 40 ♘xh5 ♖e2+ 41 ♔h3 turns the tables.

2) 36...♕e2 37 ♖g6+ ♔h7 38 ♖g7+ ♔h6 39 ♕g2 gets Black nowhere.

However, it's hard to believe Black has no more than a draw. His main task is to prevent ♖d7 and get his pawns going.

3) A move that meets these requirements is 36...♕g4! (36...♖e7!?, with the idea ...♖h7, is also interesting) 37 ♖h6 (White tries to create some threats before the pawns come; hopeless alternatives are 37 ♖f1 f3 38 ♖f6 ♖xe4! 39 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 40 dxe4 ♕xe4 and 37 ♕g2 ♘f3+ 38 ♔f1 ♘h4 39 ♕e2 ♕h3+! 40 ♔e1 f3 41 ♘f6+ ♔f7) 37...f3 38 ♖h8+ ♔f7 39 ♖h7+ ♔e6 40 ♖e1 (the king hides after 40 ♖h6+ ♔d7 40...♔f5! 41 ♖xh2 (after 41 ♘d6+ ♔g6 42 ♖g7+ ♔h6 Black's pieces are taboo and the attack triumphs) 41...gxh2+ 42 ♔f2 ♕h4+! 43 ♔f1 (43 ♔xf3 loses to 43...♔g6+, and now 44 ♔g2? ♖xe4 or 44 ♔e2 ♕f2+) 43...♔g6. White's queen remains incarcerated and the threat of ...f2 is lethal; e.g., 44 cxb5 (44 ♖e3 bxc4 and White's position falls apart; see the note about 31 b3!?) 44...f2 45 ♖e3 ♖xe4! 46 dxe4 ♕g4.

36 ... f3+

37 ♔xg3

37 ♔g1 gives Black a pleasant choice between 37...f2+ and 37...♘g4.

37 ... ♕g4+

37...♖xe4!? 38 dxe4 ♕g5+ 39 ♔f2 (39 ♔h3 ♕g4+) 39...♘g4+ offers Black another road to victory.

38 ♔f2 ♕h4+

39 ♔e3

39 ♔g1 f2+ (39...♕g4+ 40 ♔f2 ♕g2+ 41 ♔e3 ♕g5+ and now 42 ♔d4 ♕e5+ transposes to the game and 42 ♔f2 loses to 42...♘g4+) 40 ♘xf2 ♖xf2! 41 ♖g6+ ♔f8 gives Black a mating attack.

39 ... ♕f4+

40 ♔d4 ♕e5+!

This forcing move is more accurate than the alternative 40...♖xe4+?! 41 ♔c5.

41 ♔e3 ♘g4+

42 ♔d2 ♕xb2+

43 ♕c2 ♕xa1

44 ♖g6+ ♔h7

45 ♖xg4 f2

0-1

The threat is ...♕e1# and White has only a few spite checks.

Summary

The Marshall Attack is one of the evergreen gambits of the tournament scene, which continues to live because, apart from its tactical content, it also has a healthy positional basis. (A comparison with the Benko Gambit, incidentally also a favourite of Michael Adams, immediately springs to mind.) Black's possible strategic goals and motifs, apart from the natural pressure against White's king, are described in the notes. Practice has shown that if White has a way to get some advantage, it's usually connected with a positionally advantageous return of the extra pawn (the note to 13...♕h4; 18 f4!?). Polgar's 18 ♕f3 involved the rather cumbersome defensive manoeuvre 19 ♗d1; Adams's extensive experience in the Marshall helped him disarm the new idea and maintain the tension.

From move 22 onwards, strategy played a minor role in the game, as both sides vigorously pursued their respective goals. Getting at White's king is worth even a whole piece, although Adams modestly admits he overlooked 24 ♖e6. The position after 26...♖ae8 dramatically showed White's main problem, altogether typical for the Marshall – the undeveloped queenside. White finally got her bishop out on move 32 (when it was already too late); the a1-rook fell without even joining in. In this sense 28 f3? was unjustifiably ambitious and the only good move was 28 ♗d2. When Polgar missed her last chance (36 ♔g1!; Adams was short of time and might have taken the perpetual with 36...♘f3+) the game was over.

Game 43

Garry Kasparov – Nigel Short

Sarajevo 1999

Nimzo-Indian Defence [E20]

1 d4 ♘f6

2 c4 e6

3 ♘c3 ♗b4

4 ♘f3 c5

5 g3 0-0

6 ♗g2 cxd4

7 ♘xd4 d5

8 cxd5

It has been 15 years since Kasparov himself sparked off interest in this line by using it to win and defend his world title against Karpov (the score of 6/8 in the 1985 and 1986 matches from the position after 4 ♘f3 speaks for itself!). Around that time, it became clear that 8 ♕b3 ♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♘c6! 10 cxd5 ♘a5 11 ♕c2 ♘xd5 12 ♕d3 ♕c7! causes Black no problems at all.

8 ... ♘xd5

9 ♗d2

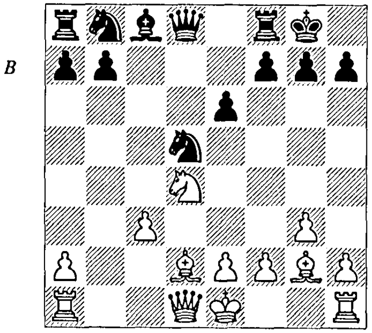
Later Kasparov, presumably dissatisfied with the outcome of the opening, played 9 ♕b3 ♘c6 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 0-0 ♕a5 12 ♗d2 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♗a6 14 ♖fd1 ♕c5 15 e4 ♗c4 16 ♕a4 ♘b6 17 ♕b4 ♕h5 18 ♗e3 ♗e2 19 ♖d2 ♖ab8 20 ♗xb6 axb6 21 ♕d6 in Kasparov-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2000. However, this gives White nothing at all, and proof came on the very same day in the same tournament hall! After 21...♖fc8 22 h3 ♗f3! 23 ♖b1 (the point is 23 g4 ♕g5 24 ♗xf3? ♖d8) 23...♗xg2 24 ♔xg2 ♕a5 a draw was agreed in Van Wely-Short, Wijk aan Zee 2000.

9 ... ♗xc3

The theoretically significant question is whether saving a tempo is worth giving White the bishop-pair. The alternative 9...♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♗e7 11 ♖b1 ♘d7!? (11...e5? 12 ♖xb7 exd4 13 ♖b3 costs Black material) 12 0-0 ♘b6

13 ♗f4 ♘d5 14 ♕b3 ♘xf4 15 gxf4 was played in Kasparov-Salov, Linares 1990, and here Kasparov recommended the active 15...♗d6 16 e3 e5 17 fxe5 ♗xe5 18 f4 ♗f6 with counterplay, as 19 ♗xb7? ♖b8 20 ♘c6 ♖xb7 21 ♕xb7 ♕e8! is bad for White. Nevertheless I feel the text-move represents a more reliable road to equality.

10 bxc3 *(D)*



10 ... ♘b6!?

A rare move, which however has its logic. White's bishops are already eyeing Black's queenside, which will shortly become the main fighting arena. Black therefore strives for counterplay in precisely this part of the board, where the hole on c4 is a welcome target. The obvious drawback of the text-move is that it loses time. Thus Black far more often plays the natural 10...e5 11 ♘b5 (other knight moves have been tested and found insufficient to promise anything tangible, and 11 c4 ♘b6 12 ♘b5 ♘c6!? 13 c5 ♘c4 14 ♕c2 a6! is even dangerous for White) 11...♘c6 12 0-0 ♗e6 13 ♗c1 a6 14 c4 ♘b6 (14...♘de7 15 ♘d6 b6 16 ♗a3 ♖a7 17 c5 bxc5 18 ♘e4! c4 19 ♘g5 ♕xd1 20 ♖fxd1 ♖c8 21 ♘xe6 fxe6 was played in Kasparov-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee blitz 1999; now 22 e3 keeps the knight away from d4 and would have given White excellent compensation with his active bishops) 15 ♘d6 ♘xc4 16 ♘xb7 ♕xd1 17 ♖xd1 ♘d4 18 ♘c5 ♖ab8!? 19 ♘xe6 fxe6 20 ♗h3, Piket-Tkachev, Cannes (7) 2000. Now after the circumspect 20...♖fe8 or 20...♔f7 the bishops are kept well in check by the centralized knights.

11 ♗e3!?

This move is certainly more enterprising than the stereotyped 11 0-0 e5 12 ♘b5 (12 ♘c2 ♘c6 13 ♗e3 ♕xd1 14 ♖fxd1 ♘a4 gets White nowhere) 12...♘c4 (12...♘c6?! is worse due to 13 ♗e3 with the threat ♘xa7) 13 ♗c1 ♘c6 14 ♗d5 and now after 14...♘6a5 15 ♕d3 a6 16 ♘a3 ♗f5 a draw was agreed in Makarychev-Yudasin, Ivano-Frankovsk 1982, but with 17 e4 ♘b6 18 c4 White can keep some pull. Instead, 14...♘b6 is equal.

11 ... ♘d5

Short's move is stronger than the straightforward 11...♘c4 12 ♕d3 ♘xe3 13 ♕xe3 ♘d7 14 0-0, when the fianchettoed bishop exerts unpleasant pressure on Black's queenside, making it difficult for him to continue development. After 14...e5 15 ♘b5 ♕b6 16 ♕xb6, followed by ♘d6, White has a distinct initiative. Also 11...♘8d7 12 ♕b3!? isn't ideal for Black, as 12...♘d5? would then fail to 13 ♗xd5 ♘c5 14 ♕c4 ♕xd5 15 ♕xd5 exd5 16 ♘b5.

12 ♕d2

Kasparov would never play the faint-hearted 12 ♗d2, while 12 ♕d3 ♘d7 only exposes White's queen. Also the refined 12 ♗c1 is unconvincing due to 12...♘xc3 13 ♕d2 ♘d5. After 14 ♗a3 ♖e8, a direct assault such as 15 ♘b5 ♕b6 16 ♘d6 ♖d8 17 e4 ♕a6! 18 exd5 ♕xa3 19 ♘xc8 ♘a6! backfires on White, so he must rely on his positional compensation after 14 0-0!? or 15 0-0 with unclear consequences.

12 ... ♘d7

Black's idea is to develop under the cover of his knight. He'll start thinking about ...♘xe3 only after, for example, ...♘7b6 and ...♕c7.

13 ♗g5!

13 0-0?! ♘7b6 suits Black; if White doesn't want to relinquish the initiative, he must act fast. 13 c4 ♘xe3 14 ♕xe3 leads to a similar position as after 11...♘c4, the difference being that here White has played c4 instead of 0-0. This is less useful and eases Black's task: 14...♕c7!? (14...♘c5 is weaker due to 15 ♘b3!) 15 ♖c1 (15 0-0!? ♕xc4 16 ♖fc1 gives White compensation, but no more than that) 15...♘c5 16 ♘b3 (16 0-0 ♗d7 17 ♘b5 ♕b6 gets White nowhere) 16...♘xb3 17 axb3 ♗d7 equalizes.

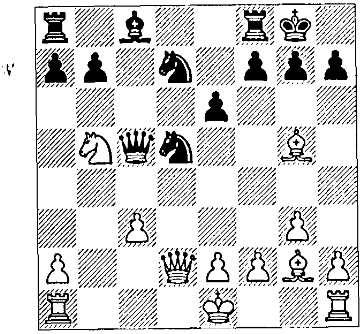
13 ... ♕c7

14 ♘b5

White must continue his balancing act. 14 e4?! means positional capitulation in view of 14...♘5b6 (but not 14...♕xc3? 15 exd5 ♕xa1+ 16 ♔e2) and practically the same goes for 14 ♗xd5?! exd5 15 ♘f5 ♔h8! 16 0-0 (the unprepared assault 16 ♘xg7 fails to 16...♕e5! 17 ♗h6 ♖g8 18 ♖d1 ♘b6) 16...♕e5.

14 ... ♕c5 *(D)*

The most consistent reply. Black wants to keep c4 reserved for his d7-knight, so 14...♕c4 15 ♘d6 (15 ♖b1!?) 15...♕c5 16 c4 and 14...♕b6 15 ♖b1! (15 c4?! is weaker due to 15...f6!) 15...f6 16 e4 are not ideal for him.



15 c4!

A typical Kasparovian stab. This intuitive sacrifice is far more energetic than 15 ♖b1:

1) 15...♘7b6?! 16 e4 ♘c4 17 ♕d4 gives White an endgame advantage.

2) 15...h6 16 c4!? (16 ♗xd5 is also possible, when to avoid material losses Black must play 16...hxg5 17 ♗g2 and again the Catalan-like bishop, in connection with ideas such as ♕d6 or ♕d4, gives White the advantage) 16...♘5b6 (after 16...♕xc4? 17 ♗xd5 Black loses an exchange: 17...exd5 18 ♘d6 and ♗e7 or 17...♕xd5 18 ♕xd5 exd5 19 ♘c7) 17 ♗e3 ♘xc4 (the only way to take the pawn; Black loses after 17...♕xc4? 18 ♖b4 or 17...♕f5 18 ♕d3 ♘xc4? 19 ♗e4) 18 ♗xc5 ♘xd2 19 ♗xf8 (after 19 ♖c1 ♘xc5 20 ♖xc5 ♖d8 21 ♖c2 ♗d7 22 ♘a3 ♖ac8! Black saves the knight) 19...♘xb1 20 ♗b4 and the trapped b1-knight will cost Black material.

3) 15...f6 16 ♗xd5 (16 e4?! is weak due to 16...♘xc3!, but 16 ♗f4!? ♘xf4 17 gxf4 is interesting) 16...♘b6! (Black loses a pawn after 16...exd5 17 ♗e3 or 16...♕xd5 17 ♕xd5 exd5 18 ♘c7 ♖b8 19 ♗f4) 17 ♗e4 fxg5 18 0-0 and Black's kingside pawns are not a pretty sight.

4) 15...a6! is best. White must then choose carefully:

4a) 16 c4? is weak due to 16...f6! 17 ♘d4 fxg5 18 cxd5 e5 19 ♘f3 g4.

4b) 16 ♗xd5 exd5!? (16...axb5 17 ♗g2 is about equal) 17 ♗e3 ♕c4 (17...♕c6!?) 18 ♘d6 ♕c6 is pleasant for Black.

4c) It's prudent to bail out with 16 e4 axb5 17 exd5 ♕c4! 18 ♖b4 ♕xa2 19 ♕xa2 ♖xa2 20 0-0 exd5 21 ♗xd5 ♖c2, when the endgame is drawish.

15 ... ♕xc4

16 ♖b1 ♘7b6

We have already seen, in line '2' of the previous note, that Black has to cope with the threat of ♗xd5:

1) 16...♘c5?! 17 ♗xd5 exd5 18 ♖b4! ♘e4 19 ♖xc4 ♘xd2 20 ♖xc8 gives White excellent winning chances.

2) 16...♘7f6 17 ♗xf6 (17 0-0?! can be met by 17...♘e4) 17...♘xf6 18 0-0 is also good for White; he will quickly win the b7-pawn and maintain the pressure.

3) The most interesting alternative is 16...f6 17 ♗f4!, and now:

3a) 17...♘xf4 18 gxf4 ♘b6 19 0-0 again complicates Black's development:

3a1) 19...♗d7 20 ♘d6 ♕a4 21 ♖b4 (Black holds out well after 21 ♖fc1 ♗c6!? 22 ♗xc6 bxc6 23 ♕e3 ♕xa2 24 ♖a1 ♕d5 25 ♖d1 ♘c4!? 26 ♕c3 ♘xd6 27 ♖xd5 cxd5) 21...♕a3 22 ♘xb7 and White retains the initiative, as the threat of ♖xb6 is not easy to meet.

3a2) A bid for freedom with 19...e5!? is indicated. After 20 ♘d6 it's sensible to sacrifice an exchange: 20...♕xf4 (20...♕c7 is playing with fire in view of 21 a4!: 21...♗e6 22 f5 ♖fd8 23 fxe6 ♖xd6 24 ♕a2 or 21...♖d8 22 ♕a2+ ♔f8 23 fxe5 fxe5 24 f4!) 21 ♗d5+ ♔h8 22 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 (not 22...♔g8? 23 ♘xe5+ with a smothered mate) 23 ♕xf4 exf4 24 ♗xf7 ♗d7 25 ♖fd1 ♗c6 26 ♖d4 (after 26 ♖d6 Black can play not only 26...g5 with a similar position, but also 26...g6!?; the f6-pawn is taboo anyway) 26...g5 27 ♖bd1 ♔g7 28 ♗h5!? (28 ♗b3 is weaker due to 28...♖e8). White is somewhat better, as it's not easy to activate the b6-knight, but whether this is enough to win is an open question.

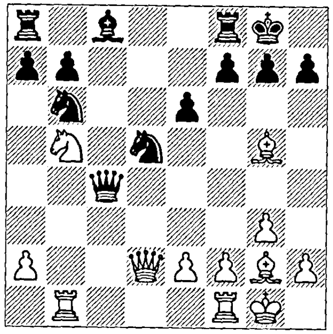
3b) Even here Black can try to keep the long diagonal closed with 17...♘7b6!? 18 0-0 (on d6 the bishop would be a tactical weakness: 18

♗d6?! ♖d8 19 0-0 ♗d7 20 ♖fc1 runs into 20...♗xb5!) 18...♗d7 19 ♖fc1 (19 ♘d6 ♕a6 is again unconvincing for White) 19...♕a4 20 ♘c7 ♖ac8!? 21 ♘xd5 ♖xc1+ 22 ♖xc1 ♘xd5 23 ♗xd5 exd5 24 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 25 ♕xb7 ♗e6 (25...♗h3!?; 25...♖e8!?) and it's very hard for White to convert his extra pawn into victory.

Thus we can't reproach Black for the text-move, as he has more attractive possibilities later on.

17 0-0 *(D)*

B



17 ... h6!?

Brave, but other continuations were no less risky:

1) 17...f6?! 18 e4! ♘e7 (18...fxg5 19 ♖fc1 or 18...♘c3 19 ♘xc3 fxg5 20 ♖fc1 is hardly any improvement for Black) 19 ♗e3 gives White huge compensation.

2) 17...♗d7 is more to the point. 18 ♖fc1 ♕a4 19 ♘d6 and now:

2a) 19...f6 again isn't ideal, as after 20 e4! ♘e7 (20...fxg5 21 exd5 ♕a3 22 ♘xb7 exd5 23 ♘c5 and Black's position collapses) 21 ♗e3 White's pressure is very strong.

2b) Critical is 19...h6 20 ♗xh6! (after the soft 20 e4 hxg5 21 exd5 exd5! 22 ♕xg5 ♕xa2 White's attack is speculative, as Black's queen has more than one way to return to the kingside – via e2 or a3) 20...gxh6. Now the position is literally seething with exciting motifs:

2b1) The natural move is 21 e4. Then:

2b11) 21...♘f6? 22 e5 ♘fd5 (otherwise ♖b4 wins) 23 ♗xd5! exd5 24 ♖b4 and, with his pawn already on e5 protecting the d6-knight, White gets an ideal version of the '2b2' lines below.

2b12) 21...♘e7 22 ♖c5! (22 ♕xh6? ♕d can transpose into lines we'll see later on:

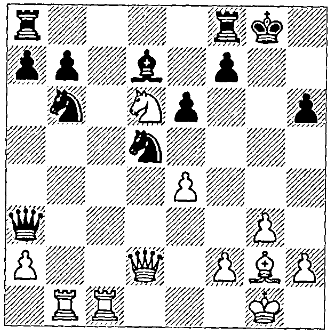
2b121) Black can't protect his h6-pawn by 22...♔h7? since 23 ♖a5 ♘c4 (23...♕c6 24 ♖c1 24 ♘xc4 ♕xc4 25 ♖c1! traps his queen.

2b122) 22...♖fc8 23 ♖h5 ♘g6 (23...♕c 24 ♕xh6 ♕xb1+ 25 ♗f1 mates) 24 ♕xh6 ♗c 25 e5, followed by ♗e4 or ♘e4, gives White a powerful attack.

2b123) 22...♖fd8!? is best. 23 ♕xh6 (the point is that after 23 ♖a5 ♘c4 24 ♘xc4? ♕xc 25 ♖c1 Black defends by 25...♗e8!) 23...♗c 24 ♖g5+ ♘g6 25 e5! (25 ♘xf7? is weak due to 25...♖d1+) 25...♕xa2! (25...♖xd6 26 exd6 ♕d 27 h4 ♕h8 28 ♕xh8+ ♔xh8 29 ♖a5! is pretty grim for Black, as he will lose both his queen-side pawns; 25...♕d4 26 h4 ♖xd6 27 exd6 is the same) 26 ♗e4 ♖xd6 27 exd6 ♕e2 28 ♗xg fxg6 29 ♖xg6+ ♗xg6 30 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 31 ♕h6+ ♔g8 32 ♕g5+! ♔f7 (32...♔h8 loses at once to 33 ♕h4+ ♔g7 34 ♖b4!) 33 ♕e7+ ♔g 34 d7 ♘xd7 (34...♕d3? loses to 35 ♕xe6+ ♔f 36 ♕f6+ ♔g8 37 ♕g5+! and ♖b5; White's major pieces will annihilate Black's king) 35 ♕xd7 ♖f8 36 ♕d4 leads to an unpleasant endgame for Black, as White will continue to harass Black's permanently exposed king.

2b13) 21...♕a3!? *(D)* is best.

W



Black removes the queen from an exposed square with tempo. After 22 e5 (22 ♘xb7!?) 22...♔g7 23 ♖b3 ♕a6 (23...♕a4?! 24 ♗xd5 exd5 25 ♖b4 is just the rook-lift Black wants to avoid; after 25...♕a3 26 ♖c7 White's attack is lethal; e.g., 26...♗e6 27 ♖h4 ♖h8 28 ♕f4) 24 ♗xd5!? ♘xd5 (24...exd5!?) 25 ♖c4 he has another difficult decision:

2b131) 25...♖g8? loses to 26 ♖g4+ ♔h7 27 ♕c2+ ♖g6 28 ♖f3.

2b132) 25...♘e7 26 ♖h4 (26 ♖xb7 ♖ad8 27 ♖cc7? ♗c6 28 ♖xa7 ♕b5!! and the counterattack decides) 26...♖h8 (26...♘g8 27 ♘e4! followed by ♘f6 gives White a winning attack; after 26...♘f5 27 ♘xf5+ exf5 28 ♖d3! White regains the piece advantageously) 27 ♖xb7 ♖ad8 28 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 29 ♘e8+! and White will end up with an extra pawn.

2b133) 25...f5 26 ♖h4 ♖h8 27 ♖xb7 ♘b6 (27...♖ad8? loses to 28 ♘xf5+) 28 a4! and with his queen trapped on a6 Black is powerless. It's amazing how White can combine attacking motifs on both flanks to get at Black's king.

2b134) The best defence is the prophylactic 25...♖h8! 26 ♖xb7 ♗e8 (26...♖ad8? allows White to win a crucial tempo with 27 ♕e2! ♔f8 28 ♕h5 ♖h7 29 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 30 ♖c8+; Black's passive rooks will be no match for White's mobile queen) 27 ♖f4 (27 ♕e2 ♔f8 28 ♕h5 ♖h7 is unconvincing for White) and now the safest is 27...♔g8!? (White's idea is 27...♘xf4? 28 ♕xf4 ♖f8 29 ♕f6+ ♔h7 30 ♘f5!) and White hardly has more than repetition with 28 ♖h4 ♔g7.

2b2) The above lines have already indicated another try: 21 ♗xd5!? exd5 (21...♘xd5? loses to 22 ♖c4) 22 ♖b4 ♕a3 (22...♕a6? 23 ♖h4) and now:

2b21) With 23 ♖cb1 White attacks not only Black's king, but also his queen:

2b211) 23...♔h7 24 ♖1b3 ♕a5 25 ♕d3+ f5 26 ♘xb7 ♕xa2 27 ♖a3 ♗b5 28 ♖xb5 and White regains the piece with a large advantage.

2b212) 23...♔g7 24 ♖1b3 ♕a6 25 ♖h4 ♖h8 (25...♔f6 26 ♘b5! ♗xb5 27 ♖xh6+ ♔e7 28 ♕b4+ and the attack triumphs) 26 ♕d4+ f6 (White mates after 26...♔g6 27 ♖f3 f5 28 ♖g4+ or 26...♔g8 27 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 28 ♖f3+) 27 ♖e3 and all White's pieces are taking part in the attack; he will mate shortly after 27...♘c8 28 ♖g4+!.

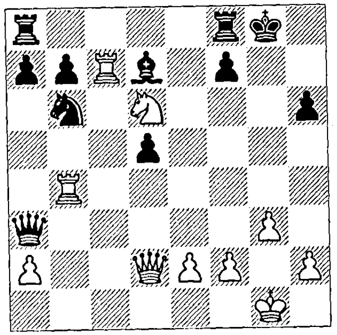
Black sorely misses his queen in the defence, so he should try to bring it closer via c3:

2b213) 23...♖fc8 24 ♕xh6 and now 24...♕c3 25 ♖f4 might be risky for Black, but 24...♖c4!? is stronger and not entirely clear.

2b214) After 23...♖ac8! 24 ♕xh6 ♕c3 Black is out of danger; e.g., 25 ♘b5 ♕g7 26 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 27 ♘xa7 ♖a8 28 ♖xb6 ♖xa7 29 ♖xb7 ♖fa8.

2b22) The aggressive 23 ♖c7!? *(D)* is more natural:

B



2b221) 23...♔h7? 24 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 25 ♘f5 ♔g6 (25...♕a6 26 ♖h4) 26 ♕xh6+ ♔xf5 27 g4+ ♔e5 28 f4#.

2b222) Also after 23...♖ad8? 24 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 25 ♖g4+ ♔h7 26 ♘f5 ♖d6 27 ♖g7+ ♔h8 28 ♕d4 ♕c1+ 29 ♔g2 f6 30 ♕g4 White wins in straightforward fashion.

Therefore Black must first of all cope with ♖xd7, and possibly also free f8 for his king or returning queen. Bishop moves allow either 24 ♖g4+ or 24 ♘b5 and ♕xh6, while 23...♖fd8 24 ♕f4 is also not helpful. Therefore, Black once again needs the c-file to reactivate his queen at a suitable moment:

2b223) Playable is 23...♖fc8!? 24 ♘b5 (24 ♖xd7? ♕c1+) 24...♕a6 25 ♕xh6 d4! (the only move; 25...♖xc7? 26 ♖h4 leads to mate and 25...♘c4? 26 ♕g5+ ♕g6 27 ♕xg6+ fxg6 28 ♖xd7 to a lost endgame for Black). Now White can immediately deliver a perpetual with 26 ♕g5+ ♔f8 27 ♕c5+, while attempts to achieve more end up with Black giving a perpetual himself:

2b2231) 26 ♖xd4 ♕xb5! (26...♖xc7? 27 ♖h4 ♖c1+ 28 ♔g2 ♗c6+ 29 ♔h3 ♗d7+ 30 g4) 27 ♖h4 (27 ♖cxd7 is also insufficient to win in view of 27...♕xd7 or even 27...♖c1+!? 28 ♕xc1 ♘xd7 29 ♖g4+ ♔f8) 27...♕b2 28 ♖h5 ♕b1+ (after 28...f5? 29 ♕h7+ ♔f8 30 ♖xf5+ ♔e8 31 ♖f7! Black has nothing better than the forlorn 31...♕b1+) 29 ♔g2 ♕e4+ draws.

2b2232) A crazy line is 26 ♘xd4!? ♖xc7 (26...♕a5? 27 ♖b5! ♗xb5 28 ♕g5+ ♔f8 29 ♘e6+ mates) 27 ♘e6! ♗xe6 28 ♖h4 ♖c1+!

(28...f6? 29 ♕h8+ ♔f7 30 ♖h7+ ♔g6 31 ♖h6+ ♔f5 32 ♕xf6+ ♔e4 33 ♕xe6+ ♔d4 34 ♖h4+ ♔c5 35 ♖h5+ ♔d4 36 ♕e5+ ♔c4 37 ♖h4# is the main line of a pleasing king-hunt) 29 ♔g2 ♗d5+ 30 ♔h3 ♗e6+ and White must return with 31 ♔g2, because after 31 g4? ♕a3+ Black's queen gets to the long diagonal.

2b224) A slightly less adventurous alternative is 23...♖ac8 24 ♘b5 ♗xb5! (now 24...♕a6? is out of the question due to 25 ♕xh6 d4 26 ♕g5+ and ♖xd4) 25 ♖g4+ ♔h7 26 ♕f4 ♘d7 (this frees Black's third rank to defend the h6-pawn from a6; 26...♗d7? 27 ♖h4 mates and after 26...♕b2?! 27 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 28 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 29 ♕g6 ♕c1+ 30 ♔g2 ♕g5 31 ♖xg5 hxg5 32 ♕h5+ White should win with his three connected passed pawns) 27 ♖xc8 (27 ♕f5+? ♔h8 28 ♖xd7 ♕c3 29 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 30 ♕xf7 ♗xe2 and Black comes first) 27...♕e7! (27...♗xe2? loses to 28 ♖h4! h5 29 ♕f5+ ♔g7 30 ♕g5+ ♔h7 31 g4!) 28 ♕f5+ ♔h8 29 ♖xf8+ ♘xf8 30 ♕xd5 and a draw is the most likely result; after 30...♗c6 White can force it with 31 ♕d4+ f6 32 ♕f4 ♔h7 33 ♕f5+.

Just one remark at the end: this labyrinth contains only the active tries for White; he can bail out with a perpetual earlier on at more than one moment, e.g. 22 ♕xh6 in '2b13' and 24 ♕xh6 in '2b224'. The final conclusion is that Black holds by the skin of his teeth, but to play such a position against Kasparov is certainly fraught with danger.

18 ♗xh6!

There was little doubt that Kasparov would sacrifice the bishop, especially as the alternatives 18 ♖fc1 ♕g4 and 18 e4 hxg5 19 ♖fc1 ♕a4 are not too enticing.

18 ... gxh6

19 e4

Just as in all the above lines, it's vital to keep the enemy queen away from the kingside.

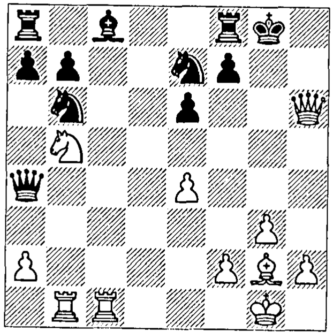
19 ... ♘e7

After 19...♗d7? 20 ♖fc1 ♕a4 21 exd5 ♗xb5 22 ♖b4, followed by ♖g4+ and ♖h4, the attack breaks through. Also 19...♘f6?! 20 ♖fc1 ♘xe4 21 ♕e1! (21 ♕f4 ♕a4 22 ♗xe4 f5 forces White to exchange queens or give a perpetual after 23 ♕xh6) 21...♕xa2 22 ♗xe4 (22 ♕xe4 ♕d5 helps Black) is not ideal, as White's attack is more than worth the pawns.

20 ♖fc1 ♕a4

21 ♕xh6 *(D)*

B



The first important critical position. White has invested a whole piece into the attack on Black's shaky king, which has been deserted by most of Short's army. However, with the exception of his queen, White's pieces are also far from the kingside, so it's a question of who manages to mobilize his reserves more quickly and effectively.

21 ... ♗d7

The text-move is not only the most logical, but also objectively the best move. The possible alternatives are very risky:

1) 21...♖d8 is not an ideal defence. White has several promising continuations: 22 h4 or 22 ♕g5+ ♔f8 23 h4!?, while my favourite is 22 ♕f6! ♘c6 23 e5 with a vicious attack.

2) The weakening 21...f6 also gives White a lot of attacking ideas such as 22 a3!? (preparing ♖b4), while even in an endgame a piece down after 22 e5 ♕g4 23 ♖c7 (23 exf6?! ♘f5) 23...♕g6 24 ♕xg6+ ♘xg6 25 exf6 ♖xf6 26 ♘d6 White has a strong initiative. However, the most natural attempts involve the c-file:

2a) 22 ♖c7?! ♗d7 (22...♖f7 23 ♘d6 ♕xa2 24 ♘xf7! ♕xb1+ 25 ♗f1 ♗d7!? {25...♘d7 26 ♘d6 ♕d1 27 e5! gives White a winning attack} 26 ♕xf6 ♕xe4 27 ♘e5! leaves White clearly better) 23 ♘c3 ♕d4 24 ♖d1 ♕e5 25 ♖dxd7 ♘xd7 26 ♖xd7 ♖f7 and White has almost regained the material, but has allowed Black to consolidate and possibly hope for an advantage.

2b) Stronger is the refined 22 ♖c5!? e5 (not 22...♕xa2? 23 ♖h5 ♕xb1+ 24 ♗f1 mating) 23 ♖c7 (after 23 ♖xe5 fxe5 24 ♕g5+ ♔h8 25 ♕xe7 ♖xf2!? White has no more than a perpetual), and now:

2b1) 23...♗d7 24 ♘c3 ♕d4 (24...♕a3 25 ♖xb6 axb6 26 ♖xd7 threatens ♘d5 and ♗h3, and after 26...♖ad8 White calmly plays 27 ♖xb7 ♖b8 28 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 29 ♗h3 ♕d6 30 ♘b5 ♕c6 31 ♘c7!) 25 ♗h3! (25 ♖d1 ♕b4 26 ♖dxd7 ♘xd7 27 ♖xd7 ♖ad8 is unconvincing for White) with a vicious attack. The natural 25...♖ac8 fails to 26 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 27 ♗e6+ ♖f7 28 ♘d5! ♕c5 29 ♖xb7!? ♕c1+ 30 ♕xc1 ♖xc1+ 31 ♔g2, when White regains the whole rook.

2b2) Even 23...♖f7 24 ♘d6 ♕xa2 doesn't solve Black's problems:

2b21) 25 ♖d1 is rather overambitious and after 25...♖h7 (the natural 25...♕b3? is weak due to 26 ♘xf7! ♕xd1+ 27 ♗f1 ♘d7 28 ♘d6!, when White threatens ♖c1 and after 28...b5 29 ♘xb5 ♗a6 30 ♔g2 Black is forced to give up his queen; 25...♗g4 26 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 27 ♖d6 also gives White a strong initiative) 26 ♕xf6 ♗d7 followed by ...♖f8 Black finally activates his queenside pieces and the position is murky.

2b22) The simple 25 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 26 ♖d1 is better for White. His rooks are active and Black's king is vulnerable; finishing development will cost Black at least the b7-pawn.

3) The only realistic alternative is 21...♘g6 22 h4! (after 22 ♖c5? ♕xa2 23 ♘c3 ♕a3 the queen joins in) 22...♘c4 (22...♗d7? 23 h5 ♘e7?! 24 ♕f6 ♔h7 25 h6 is atrocious for Black) and now:

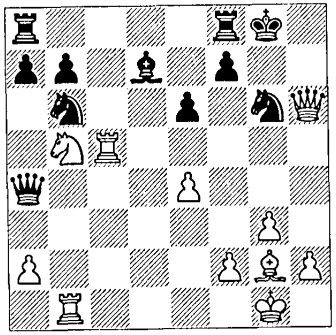
3a) 23 a3 is an interesting try. White threatens ♖b4 and further limits Black's queen. However, White can't profit from the fact Black doesn't have ...♕xa2 after 23...a5!? (23...♘xa3? 24 h5 ♘h8 25 ♕f6 ♔h7 26 ♘xa3 ♕xa3 27 e5 gives White a winning attack) 24 h5 ♘ge5 25 f4 ♗d7! (25...♘d3 26 ♖c3 ♘d2 27 ♕g5+ ♔h7 28 ♖c7! and suddenly the threat of h6 decides; Black must keep the c-file closed) 26 ♕f6 ♔h7 27 fxe5 (White should bail out, as after 27 ♘c3? ♕xa3 he is in trouble) 27...♗xb5 28 h6 ♖g8 29 ♕xf7+ with a draw, as 29...♔xh6? 30 ♔f2 mates.

3b) Kasparov gives the beautiful line 23 h5 ♘ge5 24 ♖xc4! ♘xc4 25 ♕f6 ♔h7 26 h6 ♖g8 27 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 28 ♕f6+ ♔h7 29 e5! ♘d2 (29...♕c2? 30 ♘c3! ♘d2 31 ♖d1 ♖g6 32 ♕e7+ ♔xh6 33 ♕d8! ♖g4 34 ♖xd2 ♕xc3 35 ♕h8+ ♔g6 36 ♖d8 and the deserted king succumbs) 30 ♘d6 ♗d7! (30...♖g6? 31 ♕e7+ ♔xh6 32 ♘f7+ ♔h5 33 ♖b4 ♕d1+ 34 ♔h2 ♖g4 35 ♕f6 mates) 31 ♖xb7 ♕d1+ 32 ♔h2 ♕h5+ 33 ♗h3 ♘f3+ 34 ♔g2 ♘h4+ 35 ♕xh4!! (White spurns the draw) 35...♕xh4 36 ♖xd7+ ♔xh6 37 ♗f5!! ♕xg3+!? (after 37...♕b4?, 38 ♖h7+ ♔g5 39 ♗c2 weaves a mating-net, while 37...♕a4 38 ♖h7+ ♔g5 39 ♗d3! ♕c6+ 40 ♗e4 ♕xe4+ 41 ♘xe4+ ♔f5 42 ♔f3 ♔xe5 43 ♔e3 ♔f5 44 ♖f7+ {or even 44 ♖h6!?} 44...♔g6 45 ♖f6+ ♔g7 46 ♖xe6 gives White more winning chances) 38 fxg3 exf5 39 ♘xf5+ ♔g5 40 ♘d6 ♔g6 41 ♔f3. White is better, although it's probably not sufficient after 41...♖g7 42 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 43 ♔e4 ♖f8!.

22 ♖c5 ♘g6 *(D)*

Unequivocally the best. ♖h5 was a threat and after 22...♖fd8?! 23 ♖g5+ ♘g6, 24 ♘d6, believe it or not, transposes to note '2b123' to Black's 17th move. However, here White can play the even more direct 24 ♖xg6+!? fxg6 25 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 26 ♘d6 ♖f8 27 e5.

W



23 ♖g5

White has alternatives here, but they are somewhat less demanding for the defence:

1) 23 ♖h5 ♖fd8! 24 ♕h7+ ♔f8 and now the ambitious 25 ♘d6 (25 ♕h6+ draws) 25...♗e8 26 e5 ♕d4!? (26...♘xe5? 27 ♕h8+ ♔e7 28 ♘f5+! exf5 29 ♕xe5+ ♔d7 30 ♖c1 gives White a mating attack; 26...♖xd6 27 exd6 ♕d4 28 ♕h6+ is about equal) 27 ♕h6+ ♔e7 28 ♕g5+ ♔d7 29 ♘xb7 (29 ♕xg6?! ♕xd6!) 29...♖dc8 is far from clear.

2) 23 h4 ♕xa2 (this is not unfounded greed, since the queen is trying to find a path home) 24 ♘c3 ♕a3 and now 25 ♖g5? ♖fc8! (after

25...♕xc3?, 26 e5 ♕d3 27 ♖b4 ♘d5 28 ♗e4 ♕d1+ 29 ♔h2 ♘e7 30 h5 ♗e8 31 ♖xb7 overloads Black's defences) prepares the victorious return to f8. Therefore White should bail out with 25 h5.

23 ... ♕c2

White's attacking ideas are: an advance of the h-pawn; and e5, followed by a transfer of a minor piece to e4 or the other rook to h4. Black *must do something active himself to meet them:*

1) 23...♕xa2? now loses to 24 ♘c3 ♕a3 (after 24...♕c2 25 e5 ♗c6 26 ♗xc6 bxc6 27 ♖b4 Black can't parry both ♖h4 and ♘e4) 25 e5 ♖fc8 (25...♕xc3 26 ♗e4 forces the entrapment of the f8-rook with 26...♗e8, when 27 ♖h5 mates) 26 ♘e4! ♘d5 27 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 28 exf6 ♕f8 29 ♖xg6+ fxg6 30 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 31 ♗e4 with mate.

2) 23...♗xb5!? is simpler than the complicated text-move. 24 ♖bxb5 (24 ♖xg6+ fxg6 25 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 26 ♕h5+? ♔g7 27 ♖xb5 ♖f7 and the king escapes) threatens ♖xg6+, forcing Black's queen to occupy the long diagonal. 24...♕d1+ 25 ♗f1 and now:

2a) 25...♕d4? is weak in view of 26 e5!. Then 26...♖fd8? loses to 27 h4 ♕a1 28 ♖b4!, when it's too late for 28...♖d1 due to 29 ♖xg6+. 26...♖fc8 is met by 27 ♖b3!, threatening ♖f3. White wins after 27...♕a1? 28 ♖xg6+ fxg6 29 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 30 ♖b4! ♖c4 31 ♖b1! ♕d4 32 ♕h6+ ♔g8 33 ♕xe6+ and ♖xb6, so Black must go in for 27...♕e4 28 h4 ♘d7 29 h5 ♘xe5 30 hxg6 ♘xg6 31 ♖e3 ♕d4 32 ♖xe6, when White has a large advantage.

2b) 25...♕a1! is best. Here the queen is best placed for a back-rank counterattack and also makes way for the defensive manoeuvre ...♖d8-d4. Perhaps Short feared 26 ♖be5!? (after 26 e5 ♖ad8! 27 ♖b4 ♖d4 28 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 29 h4 ♘d7 White is forced to play 30 ♖xg6+) 26...♕xe5 27 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 28 f4 (28 ♕g5+!? ♘g6 29 h4), when White still has the usual guaranteed perpetual and can try to improve his position and torture Black before resigning himself to the most likely outcome, a draw.

24 ♘a3!

Kasparov finds a paradoxical retreat to fuel a new wave of the attack. 24 ♖b3 ♕d1+ 25 ♗f1 ♕a1! (but not 25...♗xb5? 26 ♖xg6+! fxg6 27 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 28 ♖xb5) 26 e5 ♗xb5 draws as above.

24 ... ♕d3! *(D)*

The black queen continues its slalom and controls the important e4-square. Other moves:

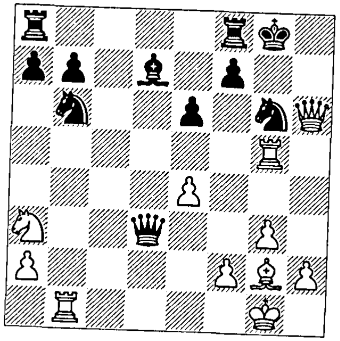
1) Once again 24...♕xa2? 25 e5 ♖fd8 (after 25...♖fc8, 26 ♗e4 ♗e8 27 ♖h5! and ♗xg6 decides) 26 ♖xg6+! (26 ♗e4 ♗e8 27 ♖h5? allows the tactical defence 27...♗c6! 28 ♗xg6? ♕xb1+! and ...♖d1#) 26...fxg6 27 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 28 ♕f6+ ♔e8 (28...♔g8 29 ♖b4) 29 ♕h8+ ♔f7 30 ♕h7+ ♔f8 31 ♗f3! ♗e8 32 ♕h8+ ♔e7 33 ♕f6+ ♔d7 34 ♕g7+ ends badly for Black's king.

2) 24...♕c3 25 e5 ♗c6 26 ♗xc6 bxc6 27 h4 ♕xa3 28 h5 ♕e7 and now:

2a) 29 hxg6? is premature due to 29...f6.

2b) 29 ♖b4 ♕xb4 30 hxg6 ♕b1+ 31 ♔g2 ♕xg6 32 ♖xg6+ fxg6 33 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 34 ♕h6+ ♔g8 35 ♕xe6+ and f4 is promising for White. However, he doesn't have to rush in like this...

2c) Kasparov's 29 ♔g2! wins by force: 29...c5 (29...♕b7? loses to 30 hxg6 c5+ 31 ♔g1 f6 32 g7! fxg5 33 ♕h8+ ♔f7 34 gxf8♕+ ♖xf8 35 ♕h7+, while if Black puts his queen on a protected square with 29...♕d7, White prepares the capture with 30 ♖h1! ♕d5+ 31 f3 ♕d2+ 32 ♔h3 ♕d7 33 g4! ♘c4 34 ♔g3 and wins after 34...♘cxe5 35 hxg6 fxg6 36 ♕h8+ ♔f7 37 ♕xe5) 30 ♖h1 ♕b7+ 31 f3 (31 ♔g1? loses to 31...♖fd8) 31...♘c4 32 hxg6 ♘e3+ 33 ♔f2 ♕b2+ 34 ♔xe3 and the king will hide on h3.



25 h4

Black's task would have been much more difficult after 25 ♖b3! (25 e5? loses to 25...♖fc8! followed by ...♕xa3 and ...♕f8), when his next move is crucial:

1) 25...♕d1+? is natural but weak: 26 ♗f1 ♖fc8 (26...♖ac8 27 g4! shows one of the main ideas of 25 ♖b3!; Black's only defence 27...♕d4 28 e5 ♖c3 fails to 29 ♘c2! ♕c5 30 ♗d3) 27 ♖xg6+! (White must sacrifice immediately, as after 27 g4? ♖c1 he doesn't have even a perpetual and the same goes for 27 ♖d3? ♕a1 28 e5 ♗e8! 29 ♖h5 ♗c6! 30 ♖g5 ♗e4) 27...fxg6 28 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 (28...♔h8? 29 g4) 29 ♕f6+! (more forcing than 29 ♖d3 ♕a1 30 ♖f3+ ♔e7 31 ♕g5+ ♔d6!? 32 ♕d2+! ♘d5 33 exd5, although even here Black can't survive too long with his exposed king) 29...♔g8 (29...♔e8 30 ♖f3 ♕d6 31 e5 ♕c5 32 ♘b5! ♗xb5 33 ♗xb5+ ♖c6 34 ♕h8+ ♔e7 35 ♕g7+ ♔e8 36 ♖f7 with a quick mate) 30 ♕g5+! ♔f7 31 ♖d3 and now:

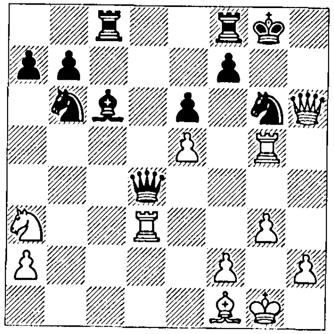
1a) 31...♕c1 32 ♖f3+ ♔e8 33 ♕g6+ ♔e7 34 ♕f6+ ♔d6 35 ♖d3+ ♔c7 36 ♖c3+ wins the queen and the game; Black will never get his rooks coordinated.

1b) 31...♕e1 32 ♖f3+ ♔e8 33 ♕g6+ ♔d8 34 ♕f6+ ♔c7 35 ♕e5+ ♔d8 (35...♔c6 36 ♖c3+ ♕xc3 37 ♗b5#) 36 ♕d6 mates shortly.

1c) The attack also breaks through after 31...♕a1 32 ♖f3+ ♔e8 33 e5!. This is the main point of the check on g5; especially pleasing is the line 33...♗a4 34 ♕g8+ ♔d7 35 ♕f7+ ♔d8 (35...♔c6 36 ♕xe6+ ♔c5 37 ♕d6#) 36 ♕f8+ ♗e8 37 ♖d3+ ♘d5 38 ♖xd5+! exd5 39 ♕f6+ ♔d7 40 ♕d6#, when White's queen does the job single-handed.

2) Correct is 25...♕d4 26 e5 ♖ac8! (otherwise h4-h5) 27 ♗f1 (27 h4 ♖c1+ 28 ♔h2 ♗c6! prevents ♖f3 and forces White to take a draw after 29 ♗xc6 ♕xf2+ 30 ♗g2 ♖g1) 27...♗c6 (27...♖c1 28 ♖f3! threatens ♖xg6+, and after 28...♕e4 29 ♖h5 White mates on f7) 28 ♖d3 *(D)* (28 g4? ♕e4 forces White to shut the third rank again) and now:

2a) 28...♕e4? 29 f3 costs Black an important tempo. After 29...♕a4 (29...♕e1 loses without any fireworks: 30 ♘c2 ♕a5 31 ♖d4 ♕c5 32 ♗d3) 30 ♖xg6+ fxg6 31 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 32 ♕h6+ ♔g8 33 ♗h3! ♖ce8 (33...♗d5 34 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 35 ♗xe6+ ♖f7 36 ♕g6+ ♔h8 37 ♗xf7 ♕d1+ 38 ♔g2 ♕e2+ 39 ♔h3 ♘f4+ 40 gxf4 ♕xf3+ 41 ♔g3 ♖c3 42 ♔h4 and the passed pawns run) 34 ♗xe6+ ♖xe6 35 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 36 ♕e7+ ♖f7 37 ♕g5+ ♔f8 38 e6 ♖xf3 39 ♖d8+ ♗e8 the long-stranded knight suddenly decides the game with 40 ♘b5!.



2b) Kasparov showed not only most of the above lines, but also that Black has 28...♕a4!:

2b1) Compared with line '2a', after 29 ♖xg6+ fxg6 30 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 31 ♕h6+ ♔g8 32 ♗h3 Black has 32...♕e4! 33 ♗xe6+ ♖f7, when White must give a perpetual.

2b2) 29 h4 ♗e4 30 h5 ♖c1! 31 hxg6 ♖xf1+ 32 ♔xf1 ♗xd3+ liquidates all White's attacking pieces and forces a draw.

2b3) The valiant effort 29 ♘c4!? ♕xc4 30 ♖xg6+ fxg6 31 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 32 g4 is thwarted by the study-like 32...♗g2! 33 ♖h3+ (33 ♔xg2 ♕c6+ 34 ♔g1 ♖f3 or 33 ♗xg2 ♕c1+ 34 ♗f1 ♖c3 also forces White's hand) 33...♗xh3 34 ♗xc4 ♘xc4.

25 ... ♕xa3
26 h5?

Here White objectively should have played 26 ♖xg6+. Kasparov goes for broke and the advantage (but not the initiative!) passes to Black.

26 ... ♕e7

After 26...♗e8? 27 hxg6 fxg6 28 ♖xg6+ ♗xg6 29 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 30 ♖b5, Black loses on the spot.

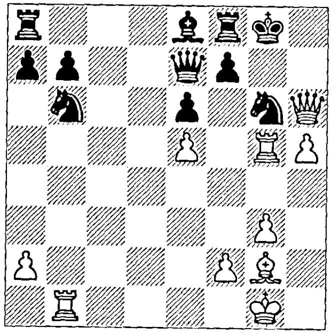
27 e5 ♗e8! *(D)*

Again the only move: Short prepares the key liberating advance of the f-pawn. 27...♗c6? 28 ♗xc6 bxc6 transposes to the lost position from note '2' to Black's 24th move.

28 ♗e4

The immediate 28 hxg6 is not as naïve as it looks and requires Black to navigate through some pitfalls:

1) 28...f6? 29 ♗h3! ♗d7 30 ♖d1! ♘d5 (or 30...♖ae8 31 ♖xd7 ♕xd7 32 g7 fxg5 33 ♕h8+ ♔f7 34 g8♕+! ♖xg8 35 ♕f6#) 31 ♖h5 ♕g7 32 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 33 ♖h7+ and White is on top.



2) 28...fxg6 29 ♗h3!? ♖f3 (White's idea shows after 29...♖d8 30 ♗xe6+ ♕xe6 31 ♖h5, when Black must give up his queen with unclear consequences; moves like 29...♕h7 30 ♗xe6+ ♗f7 31 ♖xg6+ ♔h8 32 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 33 ♕g5 or 29...♖f5 30 ♗xf5 exf5 31 ♖xg6+ ♗xg6 32 ♕xg6+ ♕g7 33 ♕xf5 also put Black's advantage in question) 30 ♔g2 ♖a3! (the natural 30...♖c3? is weaker, since after 31 ♖b4!, White threatens ♖xg6+ and closing White's fourth rank with 31...♘c4 puts the knight on a vulnerable square – after 32 ♖xg6+ ♗xg6 33 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 34 ♕h6+ ♕h7 35 ♕f6+ ♕g7 36 ♕h4+ ♕h7 37 ♖xc4 the advantage passes to White) 31 ♖c1 (now 31 ♖b4 ♖a4 gets White nowhere) 31...♕g7!? 32 ♗xe6+ ♔f8 and Black has every chance to convert his advantage into victory.

28 ... f5
29 exf6

29 hxg6? loses to 29...♕g7.

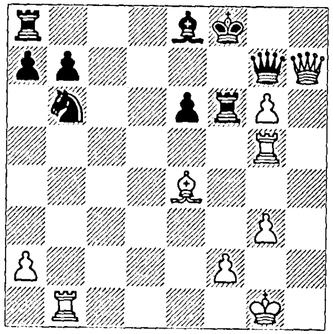
29 ... ♖xf6
30 hxg6?!

Short was in severe time-trouble, so Kasparov wanted to keep more pieces and tension on the board. However, the text-move should have lost easily. Necessary was 30 ♗xg6 ♗xg6 31 ♖xg6+ ♖xg6 32 ♕xg6+ ♔f8!? (the safer 32...♔h8 33 ♕h6+ ♕h7 34 ♕f6+ ♕g7 35 ♕xe6 gives Black only slim winning chances with his vulnerable king and offside knight, but due to the clock situation would have been a more practical choice) 33 ♖b3 (33 ♖e1 ♕f7 helps Black, although even here after 34 ♕xe6 the endgame might be a close affair) 33...♕f7 34 ♕g4 ♔e7 35 ♖f3 ♕h7. Although now with intricate footing Black can avoid a perpetual after 36 ♕b4+ ♔d7 37 ♕b5+ ♔d6 38 ♕b4+ ♔c6 39 ♖c3+ ♔d7 40 ♕b5+ ♔d8, White still retains good chances to hold the game.

30 ... ♕g7?

This move squanders a large part of Black's advantage; after 30...♗c6! the attack is over and White is lost.

31 ♕h7+ ♔f8 *(D)*



32 ♕h4

This tricky retreat quickly reaps rewards. White can maintain his queen on h7 with 32 ♔g2?!, but after 32...♗c6 33 ♗xc6 bxc6 34 ♖h1 ♖f5! (34...♘d5? is bad due to 35 ♕h8+ ♕g8 36 ♖xd5 and 34...♖c8 35 a4! also isn't ideal for Black) 35 ♖g4 (after 35 ♖xf5+ exf5 the queen must retreat) 35...c5 he can't generate any concrete threats. However, in view of note '5' to Black's 32nd move, the computer-like 32 ♖a5!? deserves serious attention. This gives White drawing chances as he threatens ♖xb6 and may end up taking both Black's queenside pawns.

32 ... ♖c8?

The decisive mistake. Other moves:

1) 32...♗c6? is insufficient, as after 33 ♖h5! ♗xe4 34 ♖h8+ ♔e7 35 ♖h7 ♕xh7 36 ♕xh7+ ♔d6 37 ♖d1+ ♘d5 38 ♕h4! the double attack nets White material.

2) 32...♔e7?! is not good either, since after 33 ♗xb7 Black's king is very insecure in the centre; e.g., 33...♖b8 34 ♖xb6! axb6 35 ♕b4+ ♔d7 36 ♕xb6 ♖xg6 37 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 38 ♕c6+ ♔e7 39 ♕c7+ ♗d7 40 ♕xb8 ♕b1+ 41 ♔h2 ♕b6 42 ♕a8 ♕xf2+ 43 ♗g2 with winning chances for White.

3) 32...♔g8!? deserves attention; in this case White hardly has more than repetition.

4) 32...♗xg6 is a more ambitious continuation:

4a) 33 ♕g4 ♔f7 34 ♖b3 (34 ♖c1 ♖c8 gets White nowhere; he has to prepare the occupation of the c-file) is tricky, but inferior:

4a1) The natural 34...♖g8 35 ♖c3! (35 ♖f3 ♕h6!? 36 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 37 ♕f3+! ♔e7 38 ♗xg6 ♖xg6 39 ♕xb7+ ♘d7 40 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 41 ♕xa7 gives Black a slight advantage; White seeks something better) in fact turns out to be risky for Black:

4a11) 35...♕h6? 36 ♖c7+ ♔f8 (36...♔e8 loses to 37 ♖xb7) 37 ♕d1! ♘d5 38 ♕d4! ♕xg5 (after 38...♖h8 39 ♖xd5 Black loses at least a piece) 39 ♕c5+ ♔e8 40 ♗xd5 ♖f5 41 ♗c6+! with mate is a wonderful line, which demonstrates the supreme mobility of White's forces.

4a12) After 35...♘d7 36 ♖c7 ♔e7 37 ♕d1 ♖d8 (37...♔d8? loses to 38 ♕d6) 38 ♕d3 White wins back some material and retains the nasty pins and the initiative.

4a13) 35...♔e8 is met by 36 ♖f3! ♖f5 37 ♗xf5 exf5 38 ♕f4 (38 ♖fxf5 ♕a1+ 39 ♔g2 ♗xf5 40 ♕e2+ ♔d7 41 ♖xg8 ♗e6 is worse for White) with an unclear position; for example, the attacking attempt 38...♕a1+ 39 ♔g2 ♖h8? backfires as White strikes first with 40 ♕b8+ ♔f7 41 ♕c7+ ♔f6 42 ♖fxf5+!.

4a14) 35...♔f8 36 ♖f3 ♖xf3 (36...♖f5 37 ♗xf5 exf5 38 ♕e4!? keeps the king in the danger zone) 37 ♕xf3+ ♕f7 38 ♕d3! regains the piece; the endgame arising after 38...♗h7 39 ♕d8+ ♕e8 40 ♗xh7 ♕xd8 41 ♖xg8+ ♔e7 42 ♖xd8 ♔xd8 43 ♗e4 ♘d5 or 38...♕d7!? is drawish.

4a2) Black should play 34...♕h6! 35 ♗xg6+ ♖xg6 36 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 37 ♖f3+ ♔g7. Now White's queen is attacked and by a series of 'only' moves Black prevents White from coordinating his major pieces as in the line '4b1' below: 38 ♕d4+ ♔g8 (38...♔h7? loses to 39 ♖f4) 39 ♖f4 e5 40 ♕xe5 ♖f8! (40...♖e8? 41 ♕d4 is what White wants) 41 ♖h4 (41 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 42 ♕b8+ ♔g7 also gives Black winning chances) 41...♘d7! and although White can take one of the queenside pawns and the game is far from over, it's clear he is struggling for his life.

4b) If White wants to get his second rook to the kingside, he should do so immediately and 33 ♖b3 is the move (33 ♖b4? is weak due to 33...♘d5 34 ♗xg6 ♖xg6 35 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 36 ♖g4 ♕b1+ 37 ♔g2 ♖e8, when White [illegible] follow-up, as checks only chase Black's [illegible] safety). Now the rook wants to approach [illegible] f-file, cutting off the king's escape-route.

4b1) 33...♖c8? (33...♔f7? is the same [illegible] 34 ♗xg6 ♖xg6 35 ♖f3+ ♔g8 (35...♔e8 [illegible] ♕h5) 36 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 37 ♖f4! allows White to demonstrate his threat and the black king falls prey to his major pieces.

4b2) Therefore it's essential to cover f4 with 33...♘d5!:

4b21) 34 ♕g4 ♘e7 35 ♖xb7 ♕h6 36 ♗xg6 (after 36 ♖xe7?, 36...♗xe4? is answered by 37 ♕xe4 ♕xg5 38 ♖h7! ♕c1+ 39 ♔g2 ♔g8 40 ♖h1, forcing Black to give a perpetual with 40...♖xf2+, but 36...♖c8! painfully shows White that he also has a king – the counterattack then triumphs) 36...♖xg6 (36...♘xg6 is met by 37 f4! with the dangerous threat ♖h5) 37 ♖xg6 ♕xg6 38 ♕h4 ♖e8 39 ♖xa7 and although the attack is over, realizing Black's advantage is very difficult.

4b22) If White wants to avoid such uncertainty, more accurate is 34 ♖f3 ♖xf3 35 ♖xg6 ♕a1+ 36 ♔g2 ♖f6! (36...♖f7 37 ♕h6+ ♔e8 38 ♖xe6+ ♘e7 39 ♗xb7 threatens ♗c6+ and White wins) 37 ♕h8+ ♔e7 38 ♕xa8 ♘e3+ 39 ♔h3 ♖xg6 (39...♕f1+ 40 ♔h4 ♘f5+ 41 ♗xf5 ♕h1+ 42 ♔g4! exf5+ 43 ♔g5 gets Black nowhere) 40 ♕xb7+ ♔f6 41 ♗xg6 ♕f1+ 42 ♔h4 ♘g2+ 43 ♔g4 ♔xg6 44 ♕e4+ ♔f6 45 ♕f3+ ♔e5 46 ♕c3+, when the king has nowhere to hide and so White has a perpetual.

5) However, Black's best option is 32...♖d8!. The rook is on a less vulnerable square than after the text-move and is ready to enter the fray via d4 or d2. White's most potent attacking idea, 33 ♖h5, gets him nowhere after 33...♗xg6 34 ♗xg6 ♕xg6 35 ♖h8+ ♔g7! 36 ♖xd8 ♕xb1+ 37 ♔g2 ♕h7, and otherwise he doesn't have enough for the piece.

33 ♖h5!

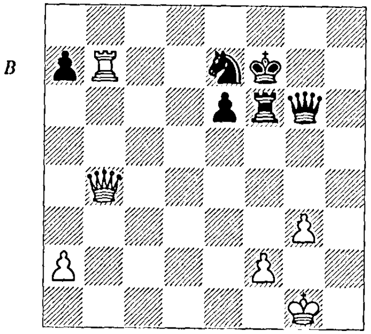
White has made full use of the time generously given to him to build up a deadly battery on the h-file and the invasion is imminent. Black has no alternative to the continuation of the game.

33 ... ♗xg6
34 ♖h8+ ♔f7
35 ♖xc8 ♘xc8
36 ♖xb7+ ♘e7

37 ♗xg6+ ♕xg6

37...♔xg6 38 ♕g4+ ♔h7 39 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 40 ♖xe7+ is hopeless for Black, since he loses another pawn.

38 ♕b4 *(D)*



The point of the forcing operation.

38 ... ♕f5

This hastens the end, but the only way to avoid immediate mate, 38...♔g8 39 ♕xe7 ♖f8 40 ♖b5 ♖e8 (40...♖f7 41 ♖b8+ ♔g7 42 ♕h4 is similar) 41 ♕xa7, gives White an easy win with his extra pawns and safer king.

39 ♕xe7+ ♔g6
40 ♕h7+ 1-0

Summary

After Short's untypical 10...♘b6!? and especially his first new move, 11...♘d5, Kasparov quickly realized that due to his structural weaknesses he couldn't fight for the advantage with slow methods. Therefore castling had to wait (11 ♗e3!?, 13 ♗g5!, 14 ♘b5) while White embarked on an ambitious plan to blast open the centre and disrupt Black's normal development, culminating with the pawn sacrifice 15 c4!. Kasparov's intuition in such dynamic situations is exceptional and Black was always short of one vital consolidating tempo.

In the first part of the game most of the action took place on the queenside, with the scope of White's fianchettoed bishop playing an important role, but this changed after 17 0-0. Short realized that to coordinate his forces he would have to weaken his kingside, inviting a dangerous sacrificial attack. Presumably also guided by intuition, he decided not to postpone this decision (17...h6!?), rightly judging there was no 'safe' way out anyway. After 21 ♕xh6 general considerations fell mostly by the wayside and the main question became whether Black's queen would be able to help its king (it can often do so even from afar; e.g., a1 or a3). The subsequent logical moves increased the tension and after 23 ♖g5 Black was in a psychologically very unpleasant situation. White had a guaranteed draw and a large number of dangerous attacking ideas at his disposal – with the clock ticking it's difficult to keep track of them all. 23...♕c2 was playable, but the general rule "exchanges help the defence" applies even here – 23...♗xb5!? was a very viable alternative.

The battle continued still very much across the whole board. After 24 ♘a3! the knight stayed alive and in many lines contributed to White's attack. It's a pity that Kasparov pointed out 25 ♖b3! only immediately after the game and the most fascinating lines (contrary to Game 39) remained behind the scenes. And 26 h5? really overdid it, but as Kasparov continued to press (30 hxg6?! instead of 30 ♗xg6), the clock took its toll and by allowing White to switch the order of his major pieces on the h-file with 32...♖c8?, Short brought about his own downfall.

Game 44

Veselin Topalov – Peter Leko

Dortmund 1999

Ruy Lopez (Spanish), Classical Variation [C65]

1 e4 e5
2 ♘f3 ♘c6
3 ♗b5 ♘f6
4 0-0 ♗c5!?

The Classical Variation derives its name from the fact it was mentioned in late 15th ntury manuscripts. It was occasionally used y Alekhine and Spassky as a surprise weapon, nd nowadays it has risen to respectable status e in significant part to Leko's efforts.

5 c3

A principled continuation. The tame 5 d3?! doesn't pose Black any problems. Systems ith d3 in the Ruy Lopez are usually only ef- ctive if Black develops his bishop less actively e7. The more straightforward alternative is 5 xe5 ♘xe4 (5...♘xe5 6 d4 a6 is weaker due to ♗c2!) and now:

1) 6 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 7 ♕h5+ g6 8 ♕d5+ ♔g7 9 ♕xe4 d5 10 ♕a4 is admittedly risky. This is exactly the type of position older theory used to regard as too unsafe for White. Black has a lead in development and the initiative, but a closer unprejudiced look with the help of a computer can reveal considerable defensive resources. After Keres's recommendation 10...♖f8 White extricated himself after 10...♘d4 11 c3 xb5 12 ♕xb5 ♗d6 13 d3 ♖f8 14 ♗e3 ♕h4 15 ♗d4+ ♔h6 16 g3 ♕h5 17 ♘d2 a6 18 ♕b3 ♗h3 ♖fe1 ♕f5 20 c4 ♗f4 21 ♕c3 in Ulybin- siukov, Russian Ch (Elista) 1996) 11 ♗xc6 xc6 (after 11...♖xf2 12 ♖xf2 ♕f6 13 d4 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 15 ♗d2! ♕c5 16 ♗a4 White can gradually unravel) 12 d4 (12 ♕xc6?! ♗xf2+! ♖xf2 ♖xf2 14 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ guarantees Black at least a draw) 12...♗d6 13 ♕xc6 ♕h4 14 g3, despite appearances Black has nothing concrete; e.g., 14...♕h5 (14...♕xd4 15 ♘c3 ♗h3 16 ♗e3 ♕g4 17 ♖fd1 is no improvement for Black) 15 c3 ♗h3 16 ♕xd5 and White will have three pawns for the exchange in an endgame.

2) White has recently come up with an interesting idea after the more solid 6 ♕e2 ♘xe5 d4 (Black needn't fear the sharp 7 ♕xe4 ♕e7 d4 ♘c6 9 ♕g4?! h5! 10 ♕xg7 ♗xd4 11 ♕g3 , also in the endgame after 9 ♕xe7+ ♗xe7 10 a6 11 ♗d3 0-0 White's pull is only temporary) 7...♗e7 (7...♕e7!?) 8 ♕xe4 ♘g6 9 f4!. This position is known to theory with the extra moves ...a6 and ♗a4; then Black can afford to play 10...0-0 11 f5 d5 12 ♕d3 ♘h4 13 g3 c5!? or even 13...b5 14 ♗b3 c5 with advantageous complications. Now after 9...c6 (9...a6 is worse due to 10 ♗d3) 10 ♗d3 d5 11 ♕e2 f5 12 ♘d2 0 13 ♘f3 ♘h8 14 ♗d2 a5 15 c4 ♘f7 16 cxd5 d5 17 ♖ac1 White had the initiative in rov-Grishchuk, New Delhi FIDE KO 2000.

5 ... 0-0

5...♘xe4?! 6 ♕e2 is too risky for Black, but 5...♗b6 6 d4 0-0 can transpose into the game (again, 6...♘xe4?! 7 ♕e2 f5 8 dxe5 0-0 9 ♘bd2 isn't worth the trouble for Black).

6 d4 ♗b6
7 ♗g5

If White wants to fight for an advantage, he has to maintain the central tension. Therefore moves like 7 dxe5 ♘xe4 8 ♕d5 ♘c5 9 ♗g5 ♘e7!? 10 ♕d1 ♘e4, followed by ...d5, or 7 d5 ♘e7 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe4 are premature. 7 ♕d3 strives for the game positions, but White must also reckon with 7...d5!?. 7 ♖e1 d6 8 h3 is less aggressive than the text-move, but nevertheless topical. White quietly stops ...♗g4 and although Black has numerous possibilities (8...♗d7, 8...♕e7 or 8...♘e7!?), it's not so simple to achieve full equality. A good example of this restrained approach is 8...h6 9 ♗e3 ♗d7 10 ♗d3! ♖e8 11 ♘bd2 a6 12 a3 ♗a7 13 ♖c1 b5 14 d5 ♘e7 15 c4 ♗xe3 16 ♖xe3 c6 (Svidler-Peng Xiaomin, New Delhi FIDE KO 2000) and now 17 b4!? gives White an edge.

7 ... h6
8 ♗h4

Again the impetuous 8 ♗xf6?! ♕xf6 9 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 10 ♘xe5 ♕xe4 11 ♘d2 ♕f5 gives Black easy equality.

8 ... d6

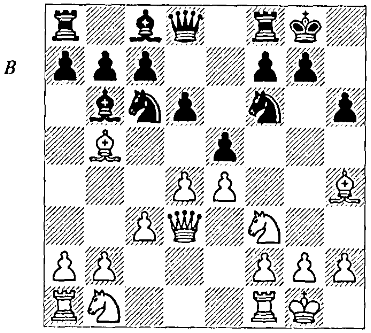
Patience is indicated, as 8...g5? fails to the standard 9 ♘xg5 hxg5 10 ♗xg5 ♖e8 (after 10...d6 or 10...♔g7, 11 ♗xc6 and dxe5 decides, while 10...♕e7 11 ♕f3 ♔g7 12 ♕g3! gives White a winning attack) 11 ♕f3 ♔g7 12 ♗h4. The threats include ♗xc6 and ♕g3+; White will win the material back with interest.

9 ♕d3 *(D)*

The most usual move at the highest level. Black's bishop-pair compensated his broken pawns after 9 ♗xc6 bxc6 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♕a4 ♕d6 12 ♖d1 ♕e6 13 ♘bd2 ♘d7 14 b4 a5 15 ♕b3 ♖e8 16 ♕xe6 ♖xe6 17 ♘c4 f6 18 a3 ♗a6 19 ♘fd2 axb4 20 axb4 ♖ee8 with a quick draw in Topalov-Leko, Linares 1999.

Another dangerous attempt, 9 a4 (the immediate 9 ♖e1 allows 9...exd4, and now 10 ♗xc6 dxc3! or 10 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 11 cxd4 g5 12 ♗g3 ♘xe4! 13 ♖xe4 f5 14 ♕h5 ♕f6 with an unclear position) 9...a5 10 ♖e1, can be well met by 10...exd4!? 11 ♗xc6 bxc6 12 ♘xd4 ♖e8 13

♘d2 c5 14 ♘c2 (14 ♘b5!?) 14...g5 15 ♗g3 ♗b7 16 f3 d5, when Black had excellent counterplay in Lanka-I.Sokolov, Batumi Echt 1999.



9 ... ♗d7

This move is now going through a crisis, so it's worthwhile looking at alternatives:

1) Very few players have mustered the courage to play 9...g5?!, although the immediate sacrifice is far from clear:

1a) 10 ♘xg5 hxg5 11 ♗xg5 ♔g7 12 ♗xc6 (after 12 f4 exd4 13 ♔h1 ♖h8! Black defends, as 14 ♗xc6 ♘g4! 15 h3 f6 is catastrophic for White) 12...bxc6 13 f4 (13 ♕f3 exd4 14 ♖d1 ♕e7 15 cxd4 ♕e6 gets White nowhere) 13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♕d7 15 f5. Just as in the game White has attacking chances, but nothing immediately decisive.

1b) The solid 10 ♗g3 exd4 11 ♘xd4! (11 cxd4 ♘h5 is not clear) could make Black soon regret the weakening of his kingside.

2) Thus a better way to implement this double-edged idea is 9...exd4!? 10 cxd4 g5 11 ♗xc6 bxc6 12 ♘xg5 hxg5 13 ♗xg5 ♔g7.

3) After a loss to Anand that we'll mention later, Leko turned to 9...♕e7 10 ♘bd2 ♘b8!? (10...♘d8 11 ♘c4 c6 is a continuation in the same spirit) 11 ♖fe1 c6 in Shirov-Leko, Frankfurt rpd 2000. Black's set-up is more solid, but somewhat passive.

10 ♘bd2

Milos's idea 10 ♘a3 can be countered by 10...♖e8!? 11 ♖fe1 (11 ♖ae1 a6 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♗xf6 ♕xf6! 14 ♕xd7 axb5 is good for Black) 11...a6 12 dxe5 ♘xe5 13 ♘xe5 ♗xb5 14 ♘ec4 ♗a7 15 ♘xb5 axb5 16 ♘d2 c6 and as White can't prepare the advance of the f-pawn with 17 ♔h1? due to 17...♘g4!, the position i about equal.

10 ... a6
11 ♗c4

After 11 ♗a4 the safest is 11...♘b4!?, b the main challenge for Black's set-up is th seemingly innocuous 11 ♗xc6! ♗xc6 12 ♖fe1 by which White just stops Black's play in th centre and makes it difficult for him to brea the pin, as after ...g5 the sacrifice will be muc stronger with the rook prepared to join the as sault via the third rank. After 12...♖e8 13 a ♗a7 14 b3 (14 b4!?) 14...♕e7 15 h3 ♖ad8 1 b4 ♗d7 17 b5 ♗c8 18 ♘f1 ♕e6 19 ♘g3 c6 2 ♖ab1 the idea is to play b6 and d5, forcin Black to go for 20...g5 21 ♘xg5! hxg5 22 ♗xg axb5 23 axb5 exd4 24 cxd4 cxb5 25 ♖xb5, whe White was close to winning in Anand-Lek Frankfurt rpd 2000.

11 ... exd4!

We have already considered this operation couple of times. Instead of reinforcing his cen tral strongpoint, Black strives for active piec play; White's pawn-centre is not as impressiv as it seems. Instead, after 11...♕c7 12 ♖fe1 ♔h 13 ♗d5!? g5 14 ♗g3 the e5-square is unde strong pressure and has to be conceded unde less favourable circumstances, since 14...♘h5 fails to 15 dxe5 ♘xg3 16 exd6 ♕xd6 17 ♘c4!.

12 cxd4 g5
13 ♘xg5!?

White makes a positional sacrifice of knight to get at Black's exposed king. This is an ambitious concept, but there is no other way to fight for an advantage:

1) 13 ♗g3 ♘h5 14 e5 ♔g7 15 exd6 ♘xg 16 dxc7 (16 hxg3 cxd6 gives White less than nothing) 16...♕xc7 17 fxg3!? (17 hxg3 g4 1 ♘e5 ♘xd4 is about equal) 17...g4 18 ♘h ♘e5! (forced by the threat of ♖xf7+) 19 ♘f5 ♗xf5 20 ♕xf5 was played in Svidler-Leko, Linares 1999; now 20...♖ad8! 21 ♔h1 ♖xd 22 ♕f6+ ♔h7 (22...♔g8? 23 ♕xh6! ♘xc4 2 ♕g5+ ♔h7 25 ♖f6 ♖d6 26 ♖af1 is hopeless for Black; after 26...♘xd2 White first takes on g with check and only then manoeuvres his queen back to h6, followed by ♖xd6) 23 ♕f5+ leads to a perpetual, as 23...♔g8? loses to 24 ♘e4! ♖xe4 25 ♕xe4 ♘xc4 26 ♖ac1.

2) 13 e5 d5! (13...gxh4? 14 ♕g6+ ♔h8 15 ♕xh6+ ♘h7 16 ♗d3 f5 17 exf6 ♖f7 18 ♘e f5 19 ♘fg5 is bad for Black) also involves White in sacrifices, but the play is then much ore forcing than after the text-move. After 14 xg5 (14 ♗b3? is too soft: 14...gxh4 15 exf6 xf6) 14...dxc4 15 ♘xc4 hxg5 16 ♗xg5 ♘b4 6...♗e6? 17 ♘d6! and Black has no good dence; e.g., 17...♘b4 18 ♕d2 ♘e4 19 ♘xe4 xd4 20 ♘f6+ ♔h8 21 ♕e2) White must reat with care:

2a) 17 ♕g3? is out of the question due to ...♘e4.

2b) 17 ♕b3 ♗e6 18 ♗xf6 ♕xd4 19 ♕f3 g4 promises White nothing.

2c) 17 ♕b1 ♗c6 18 ♗xf6 (18 ♘xb6 cxb6 ♗xf6 ♕d5 favours Black) 18...♕d5!? (the hting option; 18...♕xd4 19 ♕f5 ♕e4 20 ♕h3 h7 21 ♕g4+ is a draw) 19 ♘e3 ♕e4 20 ♕xe4 0 ♗e7 ♘d3 21 ♗xf8 ♗xd4! is bad for White) ...♗xe4 21 ♗e7 and now 21...♘c2 22 ♘xc2 fc8 or even 21...♘d3!? can be better only for lack.

2d) Prudent is 17 ♕a3 ♘c2 (17...♘bd5 18 xb6 cxb6 19 exf6 is dangerous for Black) 18 d3 ♘b4 with a repetition.

13 ... hxg5
14 ♗xg5 ♔g7

This is strictly forced; after 14...♗xd4? 15 ! ♗xe5 16 ♕g6+ ♔h8 17 ♕h6+ ♔g8 18 ♘e4 xe4 19 ♗xd8 ♖axd8 20 ♕g6+ Black loses mmediately, while after 14...♘xd4? 15 e5 ♗f5 6 ♕g3 ♘h5 17 ♕h4 White regains the piece ith a continuing attack. The text-move offers tra protection to the pinned knight and meets e e5 threat.

15 ♘b3

A surprising and unaesthetic move after a arp sacrifice, as the knight will remain offde here for a long time. White had more direct lternatives:

1) The weakest is 15 ♕g3? ♗xd4! (the alrnative 15...♘xd4?! is bad due to 16 ♗h4+ h7 17 e5, but 15...♘h5 16 ♕h4 {16 ♕e3? xd4!} 16...f6 is a possible alternative) 16 e5 xe5 17 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 18 ♘e4+ ♔e7, when lack's king escapes.

2) More complicated is 15 e5 dxe5 16 ♘e4, hen Black must give up his queen after 6...♗f5! 17 dxe5 (17 ♗xf6+? ♕xf6) 17...♘xe4 8 ♗xd8 ♖axd8 19 ♕f3 ♗g6. Formally White en has a material advantage, but Black's mir pieces are excellently coordinated and the e5- and f2-pawns are under attack. Then the series of plausible moves 20 ♖ae1 ♘xe5 (20...♘d2 21 ♕f6+ ♔h7 22 e6 or 20...♖d4 21 ♖xe4! ♖xe4 22 ♕f6+ and ♗d5 or ♗d3 might be dangerous for Black's exposed king) 21 ♕f4 ♘xc4 22 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 (22...♘d2?! is worse due to 23 ♕e5+ f6 24 ♕e7+) 23 ♕xe4 ♖d4 24 ♕xb7 a5!? leads to further metamorphoses of the material balance. White's attacking chances are down to zero and he must fight for a draw.

3) All this explains White's effort to maintain his pawn-centre, but 15 ♘f3, threatening e5 again, seems more logical than the text-move. However, this also blocks the f-pawn and closes White's third rank for queen- or rook-lifts. After 15...♘e7!? (15...♖e8 16 ♖ae1 doesn't help Black, while after 15...♕e8 16 ♕e3 ♘g4 the surprising 17 ♗f6+! ♘xf6 18 ♕g5+ ♔h7 19 ♕xf6 is very dangerous for Black) 16 e5 ♘h7 Black has fair chances to beat off the attack; e.g., 17 exd6 ♘xg5 18 ♘xg5 ♘f5!? or 17 ♗f6+ ♘xf6 18 exf6+ ♔xf6 19 ♕h7 ♗f5 20 ♕h6+ ♗g6 21 ♘g5 ♘f5! 22 ♘h7+ ♔e7.

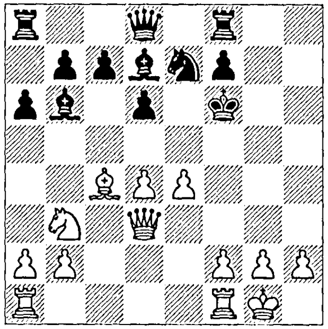
15 ... ♘e7

Logical: Leko brings another piece closer to the kingside and breaks White's annoying pin. Lukacs and Hazai have suggested 15...♖h8, but 16 ♖ae1 (it all works out fine for Black after 16 f4 ♕g8 17 e5 ♘g4 18 h3 ♕h7! 19 hxg4 ♘xd4!) 16...♕g8 17 e5 is far from clear. Another alternative to the text-move was 15...♕e8!? 16 ♖ae1 (16 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 only sees the black king chased to safety via e7) 16...♘h7 17 ♕g3 ♔h8 (or 17...f6!?) with chances for a successful defence.

16 ♗xf6+!

It's high time to reveal that so far we have seen nothing new; this position had occurred only nine days earlier between the same players in a rapid game in Frankfurt. Then Topalov played the weaker 16 ♖ae1?! ♘h7 17 ♗h4 f6 18 ♖e3 ♘g6 19 ♗g3 (19 ♖g3 ♘g5 is no improvement for White) 19...f5! 20 exf5 ♗xf5 21 ♕d2 ♘f6 22 ♖fe1 ♘h5 23 ♗d5 ♖b8 24 ♗e4 ♕d7, his compensation gradually evaporated and he went on to lose. The fact that Topalov repeats the line and introduces a novelty shows that he believes in the sacrifice and speaks volumes about his optimism. One must also admire Leko's courage in repeating this risky line and facing a prepared opponent, and it soon transpires that his own analysis was much deeper.

16 ... ♔xf6 *(D)*



An interesting position. Although White has exchanged another pair of minor pieces, he has drawn out the enemy king even further into the field and consolidation will cost Black a lot of time and maybe material. White's task is to prevent this and bring over the reserves as soon as possible.

17 f4?

Very logical, but now Black cleverly extricates himself. Much stronger was 17 ♕g3!, when Black must choose between two knight moves:

1) 17...♘c6 18 ♖fe1 (18 e5+ dxe5 19 dxe5+ ♘xe5 20 ♕f4+ ♗f5 21 ♖ad1 ♕c8 gets White nowhere, but 18 ♖ad1!? is a possible alternative) retains the dangerous threat e5; for example, 18...♔e7 19 e5 dxe5 20 d5! ♖g8 21 ♕f3 with the idea d6+.

2) Better is 17...♘g6 18 f4 (18 h4!? also deserves attention) and Black can't ignore the advance of the f-pawn:

2a) Playing by analogy with the game is insufficient, as after 18...♗e6?! (after 18...♗a4? 19 f5 White wins back the piece and retains the attack) 19 ♗xe6 fxe6 20 f5 exf5 21 exf5! (21 ♖xf5+? ♔g7 22 ♖af1 ♕h4 gets White nowhere) White gains a vital tempo by attacking the knight. Black can't survive after 21...♘h8 (21...♘e5 loses a piece to 22 ♔h1) 22 ♖ae1 with a tremendous attack.

2b) More to the point is 18...♖g8, but after 19 ♔h1! (both 19 f5 ♘e5 20 ♕h4+ ♔g7 21 f6+ ♔f8 22 ♕h6+ ♔e8 23 ♕h7 ♖f8 and 19 e5+ ♔e7 20 ♕g5+ ♔f8 21 ♕h6+ ♖g7 22 f5 ♕h4 are premature and promise White nothing), followed by f5, Black's knight is most likely to end up on h8, giving White even purely positional compensation.

This means the king should run:

2c) 18...♔e7?! is the wrong direction. After 19 ♔h1! (19 f5?! ♘e5 again isn't ideal for White) 19...♔e8 20 f5 ♘e7 21 f6 ♘f5!? (21...♘c6? 22 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 23 ♕g7+ ♔e6 24 ♕g4+ ♔f7 25 ♕h5+ leads to mate; 21...♘g6 22 e5 with e6 coming also spells serious danger for Black) very tempting is 22 ♕g5!? (the simple 22 exf5 ♕xf6 23 ♖ae1+ promises a safe advantage) 22...♗xd4! (22...♘xd4? 23 ♗xf7+! ♖xf7 24 ♕g8+ ♖f8 25 f7+ ♔e7 26 ♕g5+ ♔e6 27 ♕g6+! ♔e5 28 ♘xd4 ♔xd4 29 ♕g7+ ♔xe4 30 ♖ad1 ♕h4 31 ♕c3! wraps up the king-hunt) 23 ♘xd4 (23 exf5 ♕xf6 is OK for Black) 23...♘xd4 24 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 25 ♕g8+ ♖f8 26 f7+ ♔e7 27 ♕g5+ ♔e6 28 ♕h6+ ♔e5 29 ♖ad1! with a strong attack; White always has at least a draw guaranteed.

2d) More promising is 18...♔g7!? 19 f5 ♕h4 20 ♕xh4 (20 fxg6 ♕xg3 21 hxg3 fxg6 distorts White's extra pawn) 20...♘xh4 21 ♖f4 ♘g6!? (after 21...♖h8 22 g3 ♗a4 23 ♖d1 White will regain his piece under better circumstances) 22 fxg6 fxg6 23 ♖af1 and now 23...♗a4 or 23...♖xf4 24 ♖xf4 ♖f8 gives Black every chance of holding the endgame with opposite-coloured bishops.

17 ... ♗e6! *(D)*

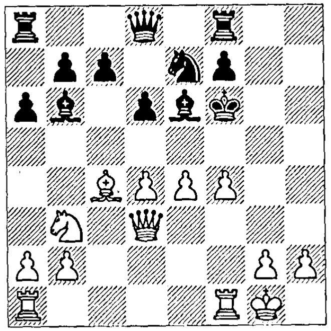
A very calm and collected move. From now on Leko demonstrates superlative defensive skills. The natural instinct is to flee, but 17...♔g7? 18 f5! (18 ♕g3+?! ♘g6 transposes to note '2d' to White's 17th move) gives White a powerful attack. Therefore disarming the attacking bishop has priority.

18 ♔h1?!

This move loses a tempo and enables Black to evacuate his exposed king. However, it's not so easy to revive White's attack in any case:

1) 18 f5 ♗xc4 19 ♕xc4 ♘c6 is insufficient for White, since after the c4-bishop has been exchanged, Black's king has little to worry about on e7 or e8.

2) Also 18 ♗xe6 fxe6 19 e5+ (19 ♕g3 ♖h8, followed by ...♕g8, is no improvement for White; 19 f5 e5 gives White nothing concrete)



19...♔g7 20 ♖f3 ♘f5 gets White nowhere, as his centre is crumbling.

3) 18 e5+ and now:

3a) 18...♔g7 19 f5 ♘xf5 (19...♗xc4? 20 f6+ ♔g8 21 ♕e3! and ♕h6 leads to mate) 20 ♖xf5 ♗xf5 21 ♕xf5 ♕h4 22 g3 and as the d4-pawn is taboo, White gets reasonable compensation for the exchange after 22...♕h6 23 ♖e1.

3b) Leko indicates the much more convincing 18...dxe5! 19 fxe5+ ♔g7 20 ♗xe6 fxe6 21 ♖xf8 (after 21 ♕g3+ ♘g6 22 ♖xf8 ♕xf8 23 ♖f1 ♕h8 24 ♖f6 ♕h5 Black defends) 21...♕xf8 22 ♖f1 ♕h8 23 ♕f3 (after 23 ♖f6 ♕h4 24 ♖xe6?! ♕e1+ 25 ♕f1 ♕xf1+ 26 ♔xf1 ♘d5 White's rook is trapped, and Black intends ...♖h8 and ...♔f7) 23...♖f8 24 ♕g4+ ♘g6 25 ♖xf8 ♕xf8 26 ♕xe6 ♕e7, when White will lose one of his central pawns and his chances to save the game are minimal.

4) The immediate 18 ♖f3 was the best practical chance:

4a) It's too early for 18...d5? due to 19 f5!:

4a1) 19...dxc4 20 e5+ ♔g7 21 f6+ is a theme from line '3a'; here even 21...♔h6 loses by force: 22 ♕e4! ♘g6 23 ♕e3+ ♔h7 (or 23...♔h5 24 ♖g3 ♗g4 25 h3) 24 ♖h3+ ♗xh3 25 ♕xh3+ ♘h4 26 ♕xh4+ ♔g6 27 ♖f1.

4a2) After 19...♗xf5 20 ♗xd5 ♔g7 21 exf5 ♘xd5 22 f6+! Black must give up his queen to stave off mate.

4a3) 19...dxe4 20 ♕xe4 ♘xf5 21 ♖af1 gives White a winning attack.

4b) Logical is 18...♗xc4 19 ♕xc4 d5 (after 19...♘g6 20 ♕c3!?, followed by ♔h1, White's strong and flexible centre gives him counterchances) 20 e5+ ♔e6 (20...♔g7? 21 ♖g3+ ♘g6 22 ♕d3 f5 23 ♖g5! and the threat g4 spells serious trouble) 21 ♕d3 (21 f5+ ♘xf5 22 ♕d3 ♕g5 gets White nowhere) 21...f5 22 exf6. Black is better, but the outcome remains open. Black's forces are not yet fully coordinated while his king still remains in the middle, while White's kingside pawns can also be dangerous.

18 ... ♗xc4
19 ♕xc4 ♔g7

Now is the moment to hide. The position still isn't ripe enough for 19...d5?! 20 ♕e2! dxe4 21 ♘d2, when the white knight joins the attack.

20 f5

After 20 ♖f3, apart from the safer continuations such as 20...♖g8 or 20...♖h8, Black can seriously consider 20...d5!? 21 ♖g3+ ♘g6 22 exd5 (22 ♕e2 ♖h8 23 f5 ♕h4 24 ♖h3 ♘f4 simplifies advantageously for Black, while 22 ♕c3 f5 23 e5 ♕h4 enables him to consolidate) 22...♖h8! with the tactical idea 23 f5 ♕h4 24 ♖h3 ♕e4 25 ♖xh8 ♘f4.

20 ... f6
21 ♖f3

The natural follow-up to 18 ♔h1?! would have been 21 e5, but 21...♘c6 22 ♖f3 ♖h8! (22...fxe5? 23 ♖g3+ with a perpetual) 23 ♖g3+ (23 ♕e6? ♗xd4! 24 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 25 exf6+ ♔f8 only costs White more material; 23 e6 ♖h4 24 ♖g3+ ♔h8 allows Black to activate the rook) 23...♔f8 24 e6 d5 (24...♖h4? 25 ♖g8+!) keeps White's pawns at bay and the black king in safety.

21 ... ♖h8

Modesty is still necessary; now 21...d5?! 22 ♕e2 ♖h8 23 e5 makes it more difficult to blockade the pawns than in the previous note.

22 ♖g3+ ♔f8
23 ♕e6

Black was ready to play ...d5.

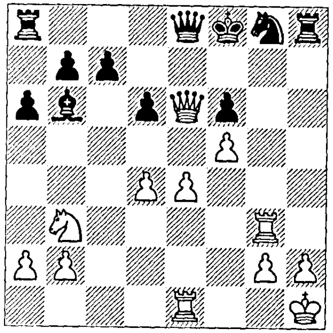
23 ... ♘g8
24 ♖e1 ♕e8 *(D)*

By now it's clear that White's concept has failed and Leko will gradually consolidate his position fully and convert his extra piece into victory. Topalov doggedly fights on, but to no avail.

25 ♕c4

25 ♕d5?! ♘e7 (25...♕c6 26 ♕e6 forces Black to take a move back, as 26...♖e8? allows 27 ♖xg8+, mating) only helps Black's pieces to get out, as 26 ♕e6 (26 ♕xb7? ♖a7) 26...♕f7 swaps queens.

W



25 ... ♕f7
26 ♕c3 ♖e8
27 ♖g4?!

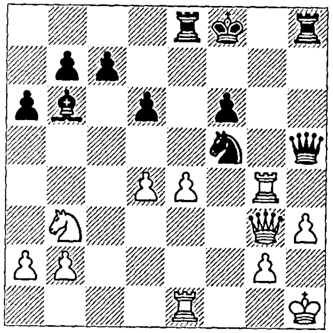
White tries to prevent ...♖h4, but only eases Black's task. More resilient was 27 a4 (the attempt to activate the knight with 27 ♘d2 runs into 27...♕d5!, attacking both the d4- and f5-pawns) 27...♖h4 28 ♖ge3 (after 28 a5 ♖hxe4! 29 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 30 axb6 ♕xb3 31 ♖xg8+ ♕xg8 32 bxc7 ♔e7 the weak back rank decides) 28...♕h7 29 h3, but it doesn't significantly alter the assessment of the position.

27 ... ♕h5
28 ♕g3 ♘e7
29 h3

Now Black achieves welcome simplification with a simple tactical blow, but 29 ♖f1 d5 is not much of an improvement for White.

29 ... ♘xf5! *(D)*

W



30 ♕f4

30 exf5? is out of the question owing to 30...♖xe1+ 31 ♕xe1 ♕xg4, while 30 ♕f3 gives Black a pleasant choice between 30...♖h6 and 30...♖g8!?.

30 ... ♖g8
31 ♖xg8+ ♔xg8
32 ♖f1 ♘g7

Keeping the knight close to the king is more prudent than 32...♘xd4 33 ♕xf6.

33 ♕xf6 ♖xe4

White has lost another pawn and his knight is still misplaced, while Black's army is well coordinated and his king is sufficiently protected. Further resistance is futile.

34 ♔h2

White at least improves his king. 34 ♕f8+ ♔h7 35 ♖f7 is even worse due to 35...♖e1+ 36 ♔h2 ♗xd4! 37 ♘xd4 ♕e5+ 38 ♖f4 ♖e4.

34 ... ♕e8
35 ♕g5 c6
36 ♕g3 ♕e6
37 ♘d2

Passive defence by 37 ♕d3 ♖e3 offers White no hope, so he finally activates his knight.

37 ... ♖xd4
38 ♘f3 ♖d5
39 ♖e1 ♕f7
40 ♕g4 ♗d8

Black's last move before the time-control. 40...♖f5 was also possible.

41 ♕c8 ♕c7
42 ♕xc7

42 ♕g4 ♖f5 43 ♖e8+ ♖f8 is just as hopeless for White.

42 ... ♗xc7
43 ♖e7 ♗b6
44 g4

After 44 ♖xb7 ♖b5 45 ♖b8+ ♔f7 46 ♖c8 ♖xb2 47 ♖xc6 ♘f5 White regains a pawn, but the attack passes to Black.

44 ... ♖b5
45 b3 ♔f8
46 ♖d7 ♘e6
47 ♘h4 ♔e8
48 ♖h7 ♘f8

0-1

Resignation is long overdue. After 49 ♖h6, 49...♗e3! forces further exchanges.

Summary

We have already seen antiquated lines enriched with new contents in Games 11 and 37; here

ko revives a whole system that was previ-ly considered dubious. This is not only due ome new tactical refinements in a few sub-iations, but because of a modern approach to ategic problems, represented by 11...exd4! e also Game 15 for a similar motif). The es also indicate that White is slowly coming grips with the Classical Variation; invari-ly, the most promising lines again do not ive for an immediate tactical refutation, but based on limiting Black's possibilities and rupting his piece coordination (7 ♖e1 and 8 ; 11 ♗xc6!). Especially the second example impressive in this sense, as White gladly es up his Ruy Lopez bishop, realizing that in subsequent manoeuvring struggle he has re scope to improve his pieces and sustain important pin.

A positional piece sacrifice is nowadays a recurrent topic in high-level chess (see Games 42 and 43) and in this game 13 ♘xg5!? was more or less a necessity to maintain the tension. Although such an undertaking is fully in keeping with Topalov's enterprising style, the Bulgarian GM underestimated one important fact: the position remained very concrete and White's compensation didn't have a long-term character; any inconsistency or hesitation on his side might allow Black to consolidate and thus mean the ultimate failure of the attack. Thus one exchange (16 ♗xf6+!) was justified, but allowing Black to exchange the c4-bishop after 17 f4? ♗e6! was already too much. And a further loss of time (18 ♔h1?!) practically clinched matters, and Leko inexorably drove home his advantage.

Game 45

Alexei Shirov – Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu

FIDE KO World Championship, Las Vegas 1999

Caro-Kann Defence, Advance Variation [B12]

1 e4 c6
2 d4 d5
3 e5 ♗f5
4 ♘c3

The current popularity of the Advance Varian is caused, amongst other things, by its flex-lity. Apart from the aggressive text-move White can also resort to quiet positional sysms such as 4 ♘f3 e6 5 ♗e2 or the lately ineasingly popular 4 c3 e6 5 ♗e3.

4 ... e6

The only serious alternative, 4...♕b6, is conlered inferior due to 5 ♗d3! ♗xd3 (accepting sacrifice with 5...♕xd4?! 6 ♘f3 ♕g4 7 h3 h5 8 0-0 is extremely risky for Black) 6 ♕xd3 7 ♘ge2 and although White has exchanged l his own good bishop, his space advantage d attacking chances rank higher; moreover, e queen is misplaced on b6, inviting further pansion with a4-a5.

5 g4 ♗g6
6 ♘ge2 c5

An interesting moment. This move had lost s main line status some time earlier, the relacement being 6...♘e7!?. By protecting his bishop Black prepares the ...h5 advance (6...h5?! is weaker due to 7 ♘f4), when if White wants to get something out of the opening he must prevent it with 7 ♘f4 c5, and now:

1) At the time our game was played the continuation 8 h4 cxd4 9 ♘b5 ♘ec6 10 h5 ♗e4 11 f3 was going through a crisis due to 11...a6! 12 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 13 exd6 g5! 14 ♘h3 h6 15 fxe4 dxe4 16 ♗g2 f5 17 0-0 0-0, as introduced in Topalov-Anand, Linares 1999. Here White's best is to force a draw with 18 gxf5 exf5 19 ♗xe4 fxe4 20 ♗xg5! ♖xf1+ 21 ♕xf1 hxg5 22 ♕f5 ♕f8 23 ♕g6+ ♕g7 24 ♕e8+ ♕f8 (24...♔h7? loses to 25 ♖f1 ♘e5 26 ♖f5 ♘f3+ 27 ♔h1), as subsequently happened in a few games.

2) Possibly Shirov was already prepared to play 8 dxc5, which brought him success in 2000. However, the resulting positions have not been so convincing for White: 8...♘ec6 (8...♘bc6!?) 9 h4 ♕c7 10 ♗g2 ♕xe5+ 11 ♔f1 (11 ♘ce2 ♘a6! 12 h5 ♗e4 13 f3 0-0-0 14 ♗d2 ♗xc5 15 ♕c1 g5 16 ♘h3 was played in Shirov-Bareev, Montecatini Terme 2000, but Shirov has not been inclined to repeat this line, as after the quiet 16...h6 17 fxe4 dxe4 Black's central

pawn-mass is nearly as impressive as in line '1' and gives him good compensation) 11...d4 12 ♘b5 (12 h5?! was the follow-up in Shirov-Bareev, New Delhi FIDE KO rpd 2000; the big question is how Shirov wanted to justify his piece sacrifice after 12...dxc3 13 hxg6 cxb2 14 ♖b1 {or 14 ♗xb2?! ♕xf4} 14...bxc1♕) 12...♘a6 13 ♘xg6 (13 ♗xc6+ bxc6 and now 14 ♕xd4? loses material to 14...♕e4! and 14 ♘xg6 ♕d5! is not good for White either) 13...hxg6 14 ♗xc6+ bxc6 15 ♕f3 ♕d5 16 ♕xd5 exd5 17 ♘xd4 ♗xc5 and Black equalizes.

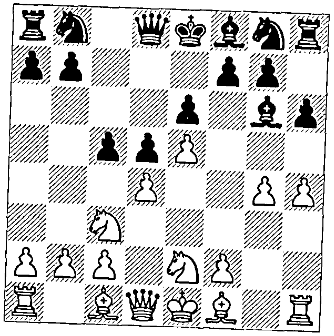
7 h4 h6?! *(D)*

After this game, it is no surprise that this move has almost disappeared from practice.

The older 7...cxd4 8 ♘xd4 h5 9 f4! hxg4 10 ♗b5+ ♘d7 11 f5 ♖xh4 12 ♖f1! exf5 suffered the same fate much earlier because of 13 ♕e2! ♗c5 14 ♘b3 ♗b4 15 e6 fxe6 16 ♕xe6+ ♘e7 17 ♗g5 ♖h6 18 ♗xh6 gxh6 19 0-0-0 ♗f7 20 ♕xh6 with a decisive attack, Tzoumbas-Grund, Herculane U-16 Ech 1994.

Thus the only continuation that currently keeps 6...c5 on the scene is the sharp 7...h5 8 ♘f4 ♘c6!? (8...♗h7 9 ♘xh5 cxd4 10 ♘b5!? is more dangerous for Black) 9 ♘xg6 fxg6. After 10 ♘e2 a recent new idea is 10...cxd4 11 ♘xd4 ♔d7!? 12 ♗h3 ♕b6 13 c3 ♘xd4 14 cxd4 hxg4 15 ♕xg4 ♘e7 16 0-0 ♘f5 17 ♕xg6 ♘xh4 18 ♕f7+ ♗e7 19 ♗g5 ♖ae8 20 ♖ac1 ♖hf8 21 ♗xe6+ ♕xe6 22 ♖c7+ ♔xc7 23 ♕xe6 ♗xg5 24 ♕d6+ ♔c8 25 e6 ♘f3+ 26 ♔g2 ♘xd4 27 f4 (Grishchuk-Ehlvest, New Delhi FIDE KO 2000) and now 27...♗d8! would leave White hard-pressed to hold the game.

W



8 f4!

The advance of the f-pawn is White's main weapon against Black's solid central pawn-chain. Therefore 8 ♘f4?! has to be condemned due to 8...♗h7, while 8 h5 ♗h7 is also weaker for White, as later on f4-f5 will not come with a tempo gain. Originally White nearly always played 8 ♗e3, but this allows Black to defuse the sharpness of White's attacking intentions by 8...cxd4!? (after 8...♘c6?! 9 dxc5! ♘xe5 10 ♘f4 Black's lag in development asks for trouble in an open position; the committal main alternative 8...♕b6 9 f4! ♘c6 10 f5 ♗h7 11 ♕d2 0-0-0 12 0-0-0 c4 13 ♘f4 ♕a6 14 fxe6 ♘b4!? 15 exf7 ♘e7 16 a3 ♘xc2 17 ♕f2 occurs nowadays mostly in correspondence games and they paint a gloomy picture for Black; after, for example, 17...♘a1 18 ♖e1 b5 19 ♔d1! ♘c2 20 ♖e2 {or 20 ♗g2!?} White's king slips away and Black's position is ruined) 9 ♘xd4 ♗b4 10 h5 ♗e4 11 f3 ♗h7 12 ♗d3 (12 ♕d2 ♘d7 is also OK for Black) 12...♗xd3 13 ♕xd3 ♘d7 14 0-0-0 ♗xc3 15 ♕xc3 ♖c8 16 ♕e1 ♘xe5 17 ♗f4 ♘c6 18 ♘f5 ♔f8 19 ♗d6+ ♘ge7 20 ♘xe7 ♘xe7 21 ♕e5 ♔g8 22 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 23 ♖xd5 ♕c7 with equality, Timman-Seirawan, Tilburg 1990.

8 ... ♗e7

White's aggressive intentions are clearly defined and dangerous, so Black can't allow himself any half-measures. After 8...h5?! 9 f5! ♗e7 (9...exf5 10 g5 incarcerates Black's bishop and the d5-pawn will soon fall after ♗g2 and ♘f4) 10 ♗e3!? (10 ♗g2 is also possible) 10...♗xh4+ 11 ♖xh4 ♕xh4+ 12 ♗f2 ♕xg4 13 fxg6, followed by ♘b5, White's minor pieces are worth more than Black's passive rooks; moreover, the king is in danger in the centre. 8...♘c6 allows not only 9 ♗e3, when 9...♕b6 transposes to an advantageous line for White (8 ♗e3 ♕b6 9 f4 ♘c6) in the note to White's 8th move, but also 9 ♗g2! cxd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 11 ♕xd4 ♗xc2 12 f5, when Black's centre is crumbling, while his c2-bishop is in trouble.

9 ♗g2

This pawn sacrifice is an integral part of White's concept. The cowardly 9 h5? ♗h4+ 10 ♔d2 ♗h7 leaves White's king in the middle, so he can forget about any central action.

9 ... ♗xh4+
10 ♔f1 ♗e7!

Black remains calm and keeps the centre closed. Extremely dangerous is 10...cxd4 (after 10...♘c6?! 11 dxc5 White retains the c5-pawn) 11 ♘xd4 ♘c6 12 f5 ♘xd4 (12...♘xe5 offers no relief due to 13 ♗f4! ♗f6 14 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 15 fxg6 ♕f6+ 16 ♘f3 fxg6 17 g5, when the extra piece makes itself felt more than the fractured pawns, especially in the attack) 13 ♕xd4 ♗h7 14 ♘b5! (14 f6? ♗xf6! 15 exf6 ♕xf6+ 16 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 is a pleasant way out for Black) 14...♗e7 15 ♕a4! (after 15 ♗f4, 15...exf5 16 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 17 exd6 gives White a powerful initiative, but 15...♖c8!? is less clear), when Black is in big trouble, as the endgame after 15...♔f8 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 ♖h3 ♗c5 (17...g5 is even worse due to 18 ♘d4) 18 ♖f3+ ♔e7 19 ♗e3! ♕b6 20 ♘d6 ♗g6 21 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 22 ♘xb7 ♕c4+ 23 ♕xc4 dxc4 24 ♘d6 is extremely bad for Black.

11 f5 ♗h7

The inconsistent 11...exf5 is not in spirit of the previous move and after 12 ♘f4!? (12 ♘xd5 fxg4 13 ♘ef4 {or 13 ♘df4} is also good) White's swarm of centralized minor pieces can cause Black a lot of grief.

12 ♘f4 ♕d7

12...cxd4? 13 fxe6! dxc3 14 exf7+ ♔xf7 15 ♕xd5+ costs Black an exchange.

13 ♘h5

This straightforward and strong move leads to immense tactical complications, but White can't vacillate and let Black play ...♘c6 and ...0-0-0 undisturbed. Nisipeanu was worried about the even more forcing 13 ♘cxd5 exd5 14 ♗xd5 (14 ♘xd5? ♘c6 makes it much easier for Black to continue his development), when Black must meet the ♗xf7+ threat:

1) The most natural move is 14...♗g5, but after 15 ♕f3! (15 e6?! is weaker since after 15...fxe6 16 ♘xe6 ♗xc1 17 ♖xc1 ♘f6, Black's pieces start getting out) 15...♘c6 16 e6 fxe6 17 ♘xe6 the position opens up in White's favour:

1a) 17...♗xc1 18 ♘xc5 ♘xd4 19 ♕e4+ ♕e7 20 ♕xd4 ♘f6 (20...♗xb2 loses outright to 21 ♕a4+ ♔f8 22 ♘d7+) 21 ♖xc1 (21 ♗xb7 0-0 22 ♗xa8 ♗e3 23 ♕c4+ ♔h8 is unclear) 21...0-0-0 22 c4 and White is better: after his knight comes to e6 Black can't profit from the temporary disharmony in the white camp.

1b) 17...♘xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♗xc1 19 ♖xc1 (19 ♗xb7? ♕xd4) 19...cxd4 (19...♖d8? 20 ♖e1+ ♘e7 21 ♘c6 or 19...♘e7 20 ♗xb7 ♖b8 21 ♗c6 gives White a winning attack for free) 20 ♗xb7 ♖c8 21 ♖e1+ ♘e7 (21...♔f7 22 ♕b3+ ♔f8 23 ♕a3+ is hopeless for Black) 22 ♗xc8 ♕xc8 23 ♖h2! (care is still necessary; 23 f6? even loses, to 23...0-0 24 ♕b3+ ♔h8 25 ♖xe7 ♕c6!, while after 23 ♕e4?! 0-0! 24 ♕xe7 ♗xf5 Black's counterattack is sufficient for a draw at least). This strong move pins Black's king in the centre (23...0-0? is not on due to 24 ♖xe7 ♗xf5 25 gxf5 ♖xf5 26 ♖e8+) and gives White a ferocious attack.

2) Black has to keep the centre closed at any cost, so 14...♕c7!? is indicated. This looks passive, but after 15 e6 f6 or 15 c3 ♘c6 Black's king is at least safe and White has yet to find a way to breach the defences.

13 ... ♗f8

Ugly, but forced. 13...♔f8? is out of the question due to 14 fxe6 ♕xe6 (14...fxe6 15 ♕f3+) 15 ♗xd5 ♕a6+ 16 ♔g2 and ♕f3, while after 13...g6 14 ♘g7+ ♔f8 (14...♔d8 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 dxc5 threatens directly ♘xe6+; White also intends to play g5 and ♗h3) White has a pleasant choice between the suffocating 15 f6 and 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 ♘xe6+! ♕xe6 17 ♗xd5 ♕a6+ 18 ♔g2, followed by ♕f3(+).

14 dxc5 ♘c6

A natural developing move. Intuition warns us against 14...exf5 15 ♕xd5 (15 ♘xd5 ♘a6!? 16 ♗xh6 ♕b5+ 17 ♔e1 0-0-0 favours Black) 15...♘c6 16 ♘b5! 0-0-0 17 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 18 exd6 (18 cxd6!?) 18...fxg4 19 ♗d2, when White's pawns are stronger than their black counterparts and b4-b5 is a real threat. Also 14...g6 is playing with fire with the king on e8: 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 17 exf6 g5 18 ♕e2.

15 ♘b5 ♗xc5!?

Black can't allow ♘d6+, so he has to take one of the pawns. The other way, 15...♘xe5?! is too risky, since it opens a central file against an uncastled king. 16 ♕e2 and now:

1) The attempt to transpose into the game with 16...♗xc5? is simply met by 17 fxe6 (17 ♘xg7+, with the idea 17...♔f8 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 ♘c7!, is also tempting) 17...fxe6 18 ♗f4 and Black's position is bursting.

2) After 16...♘xg4 the best from a wide choice is 17 ♗f4! (17 ♘xg7+? ♗xg7 18 ♘d6+ ♔f8 19 ♕xg4 ♗xf5 gets White nowhere, as does 17 ♘d6+?! ♗xd6 18 ♕xg4 ♗e5!; 17 fxe6 fxe6 18 ♗xd5 ♗f5 is unclear) 17...e5 (17...♖c8 18 ♘d6+! ♗xd6 19 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 20 fxe6 ♘e3+ 21 ♗xe3 fxe6 22 ♗g5+! hxg5 23 ♘xe6+ and

the attack breaks through) 18 ♗xe5 ♕xf5+ 19 ♗f4+ ♔d8 and now White has two good options: 20 ♘d4 ♕g6 (20...♕d7 loses to 21 ♗h3) 21 ♗xd5 ♗xc5 22 ♖d1 or 20 ♗xd5!? ♘e3+ (20...♗xc5 is no better due to 21 ♗f3!) 21 ♕xe3 ♕xd5 22 ♖h2. In both cases Black's king can't survive with his kingside undeveloped.

3) Black's best is 16...♘f6!?:

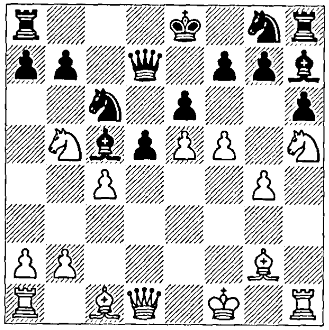
3a) 17 ♘d6+? ♗xd6 18 cxd6 (18 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 19 cxd6 ♕xd6 20 ♗xh6 ♘fxg4! 21 ♘xe6+ ♔g8 and Black is out of danger) 18...♘fxg4 is not ideal for White, as Black will gladly give up a piece and simplify the position after 19 ♗f4 ♕xd6! 20 ♕xg4 ♘xg4 21 ♗xd6 ♘e3+ 22 ♔f2 ♘xf5.

3b) The right move is again 17 ♗f4 ♘fxg4 18 a4!? (18 ♘d4 is less convincing owing to 18...f6 19 fxe6 ♕a4) with a strong attack; e.g., 18...♗xf5 19 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 20 ♕xe5 f6 21 ♕g3.

16 c4! *(D)*

One of Shirov's main strengths is great imagination in positions where he holds the initiative. Nisipeanu admitted that he nearly fell off his chair after this powerful attacking move. The text-move is certainly a rude awakening from happy ruminations over such lines as 16 ♘xg7+?! (16 ♕e2 0-0-0 17 ♘xg7 a6 is too slow to cause Black problems) 16...♔f8 17 ♘h5 (after 17 fxe6 fxe6 18 ♘c7?! ♔xg7 19 ♘xa8 ♘d4 Black has a decisive attack) 17...♘xe5 18 ♕e2 ♘xg4! 19 ♕xg4 ♕xb5+, forcing an exchange of queens.

B



16 ... ♘xe5!

Despite the surprise, Black doesn't lose his nerve and plays the most demanding move, as we can see:

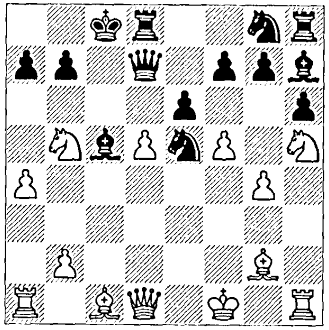
1) 16...d4 (16...dxc4?! 17 ♘xg7+ ♔d8 18 ♗f4 gives White a big advantage) 17 ♘xg7+ is different from the similar line in the note to White's 16th move, as White's b5-knight is protected and the long diagonal is open for the g2-bishop. After 17...♔f8 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 ♘h5 ♘xe5 20 ♘f4 not only ♘c7, but also ♕e2 and ♖h5 is in the air, and 20...♘g6 21 ♕f3 gives White a strong attack.

2) However, the main question is whether Black couldn't have evacuated his king immediately by 16...0-0-0 17 cxd5 ♘xe5 (17...exd5 and now 18 ♗f4 ♘xe5 19 a4 transposes to line '2b3' below; a worthy alternative is 18 ♕c2!? b6 19 ♘d6+! ♗xd6 20 exd6 ♕xd6 21 ♗f4 with strong pressure). White's next move is crucial:

2a) After 18 ♕c2?! (18 ♕b3?! ♘xg4 19 ♕c4 comes to the same thing, while 18 ♕a4? is bad due to 18...a6 19 ♗f4 ♘d3!) 18...♘xg4! (18...exd5? 19 ♗f4 ♘c4 20 ♘c7! gives White an overwhelming attack; after, e.g., 20...♕e7 21 ♘xd5 ♕xe2+ 22 ♔xe2 he is practically three pieces up) White's problem is the knight on b5. After 19 ♕c4 (19 ♗f4 e5!) 19...b6 20 b4 ♘e5 21 ♘d6+ (21 ♕e2 ♗xf5 threatens ...♗d3) 21...♔b8! Black beats off the attack.

2b) The knight must be reliably protected; after 18 a4! *(D)* Black's king finds himself in even more danger than before:

B



2b1) The b5-knight can't be chased away: 18...a6 19 ♕c2 b6 20 b4 gives White a tremendous attack.

2b2) White's advanced central pawns and more active pieces give him a clear advantage after 18...♔b8 19 ♗f4 f6 20 fxe6 ♕e7 21 ♕e2 a6 22 ♘c3.

2b3) 18...exd5 and now:

2b31) 19 ♕c2 ♕c6 20 ♖a3! (20 ♖h3? ♗b6! 21 ♖c3 ♘c4 22 b3 ♕c5 suddenly turns the tables on White) 20...♘c4 (20...♔b8 21 ♖c3 b6 22 ♗f4, followed by b4, is hopeless for Black) 21 ♖c3 ♕d7 22 b3 a6 23 bxc4 d4 24 ♖b3!? d3 (24...axb5 25 ♖xb5 b6 26 ♕e4 ♕c7 27 a5 gives White a vicious attack) 25 ♕d2 axb5 26 ♕a5 ♕d4 27 ♕a8+ ♔d7 28 ♕xb7+ ♔e8 29 ♕xb5+ ♔f8 30 ♕xc5+ ♕xc5 31 ♗a3 is quite good for White, since his a-pawn is very dangerous. However, this whole line is suspiciously long and rather artificial.

2b32) More natural is 19 ♗f4!? ♘c4, and now:

2b321) 20 b3 g5 (forced; 20...♘e3+ 21 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 22 ♖c1+ and now 22...♗xc1? loses at once to the pretty manoeuvre 23 ♕xc1+ ♔b8 24 ♕f4+ ♔a8 25 ♕d4! b6 26 ♗xd5+ ♔b8 27 ♕e5+ ♔c8 28 ♖h3; the only move is 22...♔b8, but then 23 ♖c7 gives White a lethal attack) 21 bxc4 gives White a clear advantage; the h7-bishop plays a pathetic role.

2b322) More complicated, but logical and strong, is 20 ♖c1 a6 (after 20...g5 21 ♗e5! White's main threat is ♖xc4 and 21...f6 22 ♗d4 ♕e7 23 b3 ♘e3+ 24 ♗xe3 ♕xe3 25 ♘d4 costs Black a piece; 20...g6 21 b3! gxh5 22 bxc4 d4 23 ♕e1! and again the attack is too much, a nice line being 23...♖e8 24 ♕a5 b6 25 ♕a6+ ♔d8 26 ♗c7+ ♔e7 27 ♕b7! hxg4 28 ♗xb6! and ♖e1+ decides) 21 ♘c3 ♘e7 (after 21...♗e3 22 ♘xd5 ♗xc1 23 ♘b6+! Black loses on the spot) 22 b3 ♗e3 23 ♘xd5! ♗xc1 24 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 25 ♕xc1 ♖d4 26 bxc4 ♖e8 27 ♗f3. Although Black has managed to keep the deadly c-file closed, White should be able to exploit his material advantage.

2b4) An attempt to free the bishop with 18...exf5 19 ♗f4 fxg4!? 20 ♖c1 b6 (20...♗d3+? 21 ♕xd3! ♘xd3 22 ♘xa7#) 21 ♗xe5 (21 b4? ♗d3+ 22 ♔e1 ♗xb5 23 axb5 ♕xb5 is good for Black) 21...♕f5+ 22 ♗f4 g5 23 b4 gxf4 24 bxc5 leads to a sharp position, where White's play should be faster.

All these lines demonstrate that Black's main problem is the activation of his three sleeping kingside pieces; without their participation White's attack has every chance to succeed.

17 ♕e2

17 ♗f4? is trivially refuted by 17...♘xc4 18 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 19 ♗xc7 ♘e3+.

17 ... ♘xc4

17...dxc4? is weak due to 18 ♕xe5 ♕xb5 19 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 20 ♗e3! and also after 17...f6 18 ♗f4! (18 fxe6?! is met by 18...♕e7, when the threat of ...♗d3 gives Black an important tempo) 18...dxc4 (18...0-0-0 loses to 19 cxd5 and ♖c1) 19 ♗xe5 fxe5 20 ♕xe5! ♕xb5 (20...♕d3+ 21 ♔e1 ♗b4+ 22 ♔f2 doesn't help Black) 21 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 (21...♔d7 22 ♖d1+ ♔c8 23 ♘xe6 mates, while 21...♔f7 also loses on the spot, to 22 fxe6+ ♔f8 23 ♕f4+!) 22 ♕c7+ Black's position falls apart.

18 ♗xd5! ♕xb5!?

The artificial 18...♘d2+? 19 ♗xd2 0-0-0 is convincingly refuted by 20 ♘f4! exd5 21 ♖c1 b6 22 b4. With the text-move, Black still entertains hopes of castling, whereas after 18...♘d6 19 ♘xd6+ (19 fxe6? ♕xb5 20 exf7+ ♔f8 21 fxg8♕+ ♗xg8 gets White nowhere) 19...♕xd6 20 ♗xb7 ♖d8 21 ♗f4 his king would remain confined to the centre.

19 ♗xc4 ♕b6

20 fxe6

A very natural move, but now Black gets his king to relative safety and his h7-bishop is alive again. Therefore 20 ♘xg7+!? ♔f8 21 ♘h5 deserved serious attention, especially as 21...exf5? 22 ♕e5 ♗d4 (22...♕c6 also loses, to 23 ♗xh6+! ♕xh6 24 ♕xc5+!) 23 ♕d5 ♗g6 24 ♘f4! threatens both ♘xg6+ and gxf5 and wins at least a piece, as 24...♕f6 25 ♘xg6+ fxg6 26 g5! ♕g7 27 gxh6 ♕f6 28 ♗g5 will be even more costly for Black. Also after 21...♕c6 22 ♖h3 it is hard to see how Black can untangle his pieces; White's intention is, e.g., 23 fxe6 fxe6 24 ♘f4.

20 ... 0-0-0

Forced, as 20...fxe6? 21 ♘xg7+ is terrible for Black.

21 exf7

21 ♗f4?! is complicated, but weaker:

1) After 21...♘e7 Black must reckon with the dangerous 22 ♖c1! (22 exf7 ♘d5 transposes to the note to White's 22nd move), when his king quickly becomes a target.

2) Stronger is 21...♖d4! 22 exf7 (22 ♗e3 ♖e4 23 exf7 transposes to line '2c') 22...♖e4 and now:

2a) After 23 fxg8♕+ ♖xg8 the queen has no good retreat.

2b) 23 ♗e6+ ♕xe6 24 ♖c1 ♘e7 25 ♖xc5+ ♘c6 costs White the f7-pawn.

2c) After 23 ♗e3 ♘f6 24 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 25 ♗e6+ ♔b8 26 ♕h2+ ♔a8 27 ♘xg7 ♘xg4 White's bare king suddenly has to face Black's whole army.

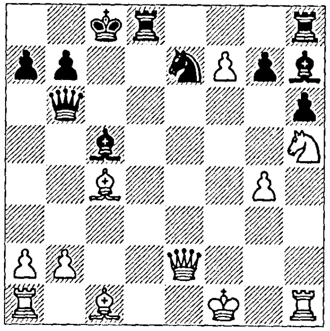
2d) 23 b4!? is a surprising queen sacrifice that enhances the strength of White's passed pawn. Black must now be very alert:

2d1) 23...♖xe2? 24 bxc5 ♖f2+ (after 24...♕c6 25 f8♕+ ♖e8 26 ♕d6 Black either gets mated or remains a piece down; 24...♕xc5 25 ♗xe2 ♘e7 26 ♖c1 ♗c2 27 ♖h3 also costs Black material) 25 ♔xf2 ♕b2+ (25...♕xc5+ 26 ♔g3 is no improvement for Black) 26 ♔g3 and Black is in serious trouble; e.g., 26...♘f6 27 ♗e6+ ♔d8 28 ♘xf6 ♕c3+ 29 ♔g2 ♕xf6 30 ♖ad1+ ♔e7 31 ♖he1 ♕xf4 (31...♕xe6 32 f8♕+! ♖xf8 33 ♗d6+) 32 ♗d5+ ♔d8 33 ♗f3+.

2d2) Black should ignore material for the time being and focus his attention on the counterattack with 23...♘f6! (23...♕c6 24 bxc5 ♘f6 is the same) 24 bxc5 ♕c6. After 25 ♕g2 (25 ♕f3?! is even worse since 25...♘xh5 threatens ...♖xf4 and after 26 ♖xh5 ♕f6 White's position falls to pieces) 25...♘xh5 26 ♗d6 ♘f4 27 ♕f3 ♖xc4 28 ♕xc6+ bxc6 29 f8♕+ (29 ♖e1 ♗e4 30 ♗xf4 ♖f8! is hopeless for White) 29...♖xf8 30 ♗xf8 ♖c2! White must return the exchange and ends up in a lost endgame.

21 ... ♘e7 *(D)*

W



The position has changed drastically. Black has activated all his pieces, while White, whose king is the more vulnerable one now, pins his hopes on the strong passed pawn.

22 ♕e6+

A natural move. Without the queens White will have fewer problems with his king. After 22 ♗f4 ♘d5 23 ♗xd5 (after 23 ♖d1 ♘xf4 24 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8!? 25 ♘xf4 ♕f6 26 ♕f3 ♔c8 Black reliably controls f8 and must be better in view of his safer king; however, 23 ♖h3!? is interesting) 23...♖xd5 24 ♕e8+ ♖d8 25 ♕e5 ♗d3+ (25...♗d6!?) 26 ♔g2 ♕c6+ 27 ♔h2 ♗d4! 28 ♕e7 Black can force a draw with 28...♗c5 (28...♖he8?! is risky and gives White winning chances after 29 fxe8♕ ♖xe8 30 ♖ac1! ♖xe7 31 ♖xc6+ bxc6 32 ♖d1 ♖d7 33 ♖xd3 g5 34 ♗g3 ♗g1+ 35 ♔xg1 ♖xd3 36 ♗e5).

22 ... ♔b8

22...♕xe6? 23 ♗xe6+ ♔b8 24 ♗f4+ ♔a8 allows 25 ♘xg7 (or 25 ♗e5), as White's bishop has already left the exposed c4-square.

23 ♗f4+

Paradoxically, this natural and ambitious move throws away any last claims for an advantage that White might have had. He had two more modest options:

1) 23 ♕xb6 axb6 24 ♘xg7 ♖hf8! (not 24...♖d1+? due to 25 ♔e2) and now:

1a) 25 ♗xh6 ♘d5 26 ♗f4+ (after 26 ♗xd5 ♖xd5! 27 ♗f4+ ♔a7 28 ♖xh7 ♖xf7 Black regains the piece with a dangerous attack) 26...♘xf4 27 ♖xh7 ♖d2 28 ♘e6 ♖f2+ 29 ♔e1 ♘g2+ 30 ♔d1 ♘e3+ guarantees Black a draw, as 31 ♔c1? ♘xc4 32 ♘xf8 ♗e3+ mates.

1b) After 25 ♖xh6 ♗d3+ 26 ♗xd3 ♖xf7+ 27 ♗f5 (after 27 ♘f5 ♖xd3 28 ♔e2 ♖d5 29 ♘e3 {or 29 ♗f4+ ♔a7} 29...♖e5 30 ♖h5 ♖xh5 31 gxh5 ♖h7 Black wins back the pawn with a draw) 27...♖xg7 28 ♗e6 ♔a7 it is White for a change who has problems with his development, and so exploiting the extra pawn is next to impossible; e.g., 29 g5 (29 ♔c2 ♘g8! wins the g-pawn or an exchange) 29...♘c6.

2) 23 ♘xg7!? is safer. Then 23...♖d1+ (Black gets nowhere after 23...♕c7 24 ♔g2) 24 ♔g2 (24 ♔e2? is met by 24...♖xc1!, when taking the rook leads to mate) 24...♕xe6 (24...♖xc1? 25 ♖axc1 ♕xb2+ 26 ♗e2) 25 ♘xe6 ♗e4+ 26 ♔g3 ♗d6+ 27 ♗f4 ♗xf4+ 28 ♔xf4 ♖xh1 29 ♖xh1 ♗xh1 30 f8♕+ ♖xf8+ 31 ♘xf8 ♔c7 32 ♔e5 leads by force to an endgame where White's more active king gives him some winning chances without any risk whatsoever.

23 ... ♔a8
24 ♕xb6 axb6

25 ♗e5

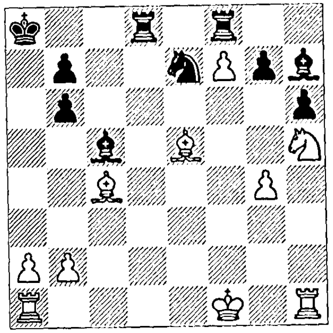
Logical and apparently decisive, but Black has a clever tactical resource. However, an advantage, let alone a win, is nowhere to be seen even after other moves:

1) 25 ♘xg7?! ♖d4 26 ♘e6 ♖xc4 27 ♗e5 (27 ♗xh6 ♗d3+ 28 ♔e1 ♘g6 and White remains piece down) 27...♗d3+ 28 ♔g2 ♖c8 29 f8♕ ♖xf8 30 ♘xf8 ♘c6! 31 ♘d7 ♖xg4+!? (Black wants more than the draw he could take by 31...♗e4+) 32 ♔h2 (32 ♔f3? ♗f5) 32...♗f5 33 ♘xc5 ♘xe5 34 ♖af1 ♖g5 35 ♘b3 ♘g4+ 36 ♔g3 ♘e3+ 37 ♔f4 ♘xf1 38 ♖xh6 ♖g2 39 ♔xf5 ♖xb2 40 ♘d4 and although the endgame is drawish, White is the one who must prove it.

2) 25 ♔e2 ♖d4 (25...♘d5 is weak since after 26 ♖hd1 ♗e4 27 ♗e5 ♖hf8 28 ♘f4! the f7-pawn stays alive) 26 ♖ac1 ♗g6 27 ♖hf1 ♖f8 and now the forced 28 ♘xg7 ♗xf7 leads to simplification and equality.

25 ... ♖hf8! *(D)*

W



26 ♔e2?!

Shirov continues to pursue the elusive advantage, but the text-move puts him on the edge of a precipice. It was time to bail out with 26 ♗xg7 (weaker is 26 ♘xg7?! ♗d3+ 27 ♗xd3 ♖xd3 28 ♖xh6 ♖xf7+ 29 ♔g2 ♘g6! 30 ♗c3 ♖f4, when White has problems with his king) 26...♗d3+! 27 ♗xd3 ♖xf7+ 28 ♗f5 (28 ♔e1 ♖xd3 29 ♗xh6 ♖f2 gives Black sufficient compensation) 28...♘xf5 29 gxf5 ♖xf5+ 30 ♔e1 (after both 30 ♔e2 ♖dd5! 31 ♘g3 ♖g5 and 30 ♔g2 ♖d2+ 31 ♔g3 ♖d3+ 32 ♔h4 ♗e7+ 33 ♔g4 ♖g5+ 34 ♔f4 ♖dd5 Black wins back the piece, with a draw in sight) 30...♖dd5! 31 ♘f6 ♖fe5+ 32 ♔f1 ♖f5+ with perpetual check.

26 ... ♘d5
27 ♖hf1?

After holding the initiative for most of the game, Shirov, down to his last five minutes, can't readjust himself to start fighting for a draw and blunders an exchange. Imperative was 27 ♘xg7! (27 ♖hd1? is little better than the text-move due to 27...♖xf7!: 28 ♗xd5 ♖f2+ 29 ♔e1 ♖e8 or 28 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 29 ♗xd5 ♖e7) 27...♖xf7 28 ♘e6 (28 ♖xh6? ♖f2+ 29 ♔e1 ♘b4 mates) and now:

1) The direct 28...♖f2+ 29 ♔e1 ♘b4 30 ♘xc5! (the attempt to give a perpetual immediately with 30 ♘c7+ ♔b8! is actually risky for White: 31 ♘b5+ ♔c8 32 ♗e6+ ♖d7 33 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 34 ♖d1+ ♘d3+ 35 ♖xd3+ ♗xd3 36 ♘c3 ♖xb2 37 ♖xh6 ♖g2 or 31 ♘a6+ ♔a7 32 ♘xb4 ♖e8 33 ♖h5 ♗g6 34 ♘d3 ♗xh5 35 ♘xf2 ♖xe5+ 36 ♗e2 ♗g6) 30...♖dd2 31 ♖c1 bxc5!? (31...♘c2+? loses to 32 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 33 ♖h3, while after 31...♗d3 32 ♘xd3 ♖de2+ Black gives a perpetual) leads only to approximate equality after 32 ♖h3 ♔a7 33 ♖f3!.

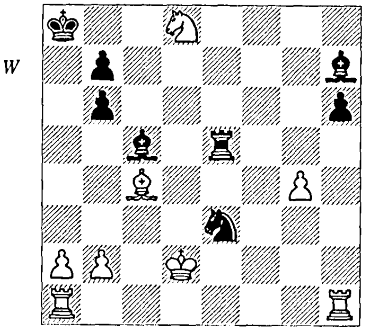
2) 28...♖e7! is more ambitious and stronger:

2a) 29 ♖xh6?! ♗g8! 30 ♗xd5 (after 30 ♘xd8 ♖xe5+ 31 ♔f3 ♖e3+ 32 ♔g2 ♘f4+ Black wins a piece and retains a strong attack) 30...♖xd5 31 ♘c7+ ♔b8 32 ♘xd5+ ♖xe5+ 33 ♔d3 ♗xd5 and Black has good winning chances with his bishop-pair.

2b) 29 ♘xd8 ♖xe5+ at least enables White to play 30 ♔d2, but after 30...♘e3! *(D)* (White somehow extricates himself after 30...♗b4+ 31 ♔c1 ♘e3 32 ♖xh6 ♗e4 33 a3! ♗e7 34 ♘f7 ♖c5 {or 34...♘xc4 35 b3!?} 35 b3 with the point 35...b5? 36 ♖e6) Black's pieces are swarming all over the place and White must watch his step:

2b1) 31 ♔c3? ♖e4 32 ♗d3 (the alternative 32 b3 ♗d4+ 33 ♔d2 ♘xc4+ 34 bxc4 ♗xa1 costs White a piece) 32...♗b4+ 33 ♔b3 ♗g8+ 34 ♔a4 ♖d4 and Black wins material with an ongoing attack.

2b2) After 31 ♗b3 Black can calmly play 31...♘xg4!?, as he will be able to regain the exchange later at his leisure. In fact ...♗b4+ and ...♗e3+ are even more serious threats now, so White should play 32 ♖h3 ♗b4+ 33 ♖c3, although Black's winning chances are undeniable.



27 ... ♘e3
28 ♗b5

28 ♗xg7 ♘xc4 29 ♗xf8 ♗d3+ 30 ♔e1 ♖xf8 makes it even easier for Black, as his minor pieces dominate the board.

28 ... ♘xf1
29 ♖xf1 ♗g6
30 ♖f4

White's effort to create threats and hold on to his f-pawn as long as possible only hastens the end. 30 ♗c4 ♗d4 is no better for him than the text, but the sober 30 ♗xg7 ♖xf7 31 ♖xf7 ♗xf7 32 ♗xh6 was more resilient. If Black now immediately captures the passed pawn with 32...♖h8 and ...♗xh5, White can consolidate his queenside and the technical phase will be long and difficult. However, the g4-pawn is not too dangerous with so many black pieces on the board, so concentrating on the queenside first with 32...♗xa2 or 32...♖d4!? and ...♖b4 should suffice to win.

30 ... ♗d6
31 ♗xd6 ♖xd6
32 ♗c4

32 ♗e8 ♖e6+ 33 ♔f3 ♖e7 is simple, but after the text-move White also loses his last trump.

32 ... b5
33 ♗b3

33 ♗xb5 ♖xf7 34 ♖xf7 ♗xf7 35 ♘xg7 ♗xa2 will cost White another pawn after the further ...♖b6.

33 ... ♗d3+
34 ♔e3 g5
35 ♖f2

Also after 35 ♖b4 ♗g6 the game will soon be over.

35 ... ♗c4
36 ♗xc4 bxc4
37 ♔e4 ♖d7
38 ♖f6 ♖fxf7
39 ♖xh6 ♖fe7+
40 ♔f5 ♖d5+
41 ♔g6 ♖e2
0-1

Summary

Although at first sight 3 e5 leads to positions resembling the Advance French with the problem of the c8-bishop fully solved, matters are not as simple as that. First of all, White still enjoys a space advantage while the natural counterplay with ...c5 is slowed down. Secondly, in the quiet lines mentioned above, even when Black achieves the desired advance he may miss his light-squared bishop on the queenside once the centre opens up. In our game, White opted for a different approach and the f5-bishop became the object of a sharp and dangerous assault. Against this plan, vigorous countermeasures are needed; recent games (Topalov-Anand and Shirov-Bareev) show that Black often has to sacrifice his bishop in the interests of full-blooded counterplay. 7...h6?! is rather passive and 8 f4! is exactly the energetic reaction that pinpoints this drawback.

The further course of the game however shows how difficult it is sometimes to come up with concrete tactical proof of an otherwise sound general assessment. "White has a strong initiative" – this phrase was certainly appropriate from move 10 onwards, but required a lot of resourcefulness (16 c4!) to uphold against a determined opponent fighting for his life (Nisipeanu was in excellent form in Las Vegas). The main drawbacks of Black's position were his passive kingside forces and his endangered king. White's decision to trade these pluses for a strong f7-pawn (20 fxe6) was questionable; 20 ♘xg7+!? was certainly a more consistent continuation. Shirov underestimated the energy of Black's long-pent-up pieces, optimistically disregarding his own unconnected rooks and vulnerable king. This explains the series of inaccuracies (23 ♗f4+, 26 ♔e2?!), culminating with the oversight 27 ♖hf1?, after which the rest of the game was plain sailing for Nisipeanu.

Game 46

Garry Kasparov – The World

Internet (www.zone.com) 1999

Sicilian Defence [B52]

This splendid fighting game requires a short introduction, as Black's 'name' indicates it wasn't a normal match or tournament encounter. It took place on Microsoft's Gaming Zone, lasted 124 days and became the greatest interactive event ever with over three million 'hits'. The World's moves were the continuations that got the largest number of votes. The team was coached by four promising junior players, Bacrot, Felecan, Krush and Pähtz, who in advance posted their suggestions on the web. Especially thanks to Irina Krush, who took the matter very seriously and even managed to engage quite a few high-calibre consultants (including the Grandmaster Chess School led by Alexander Khalifman), the Internet was flooded with analysis and Kasparov was confronted with a really serious challenge.

1 c4 c5
2 ♘f3 d6
3 ♗b5+

The current verdict due to the recent efforts of Baklan and especially Rublevsky is that White can hope for a slight edge even in this quiet line. Although Kasparov has rarely been known to avoid a sharp opening dispute, against a very loosely defined opponent he presumably just wanted to play chess without disclosing any crucial novelties in the variations of the Open Sicilian he plays with both colours. However, he was in for a theoretical surprise himself!

3 ... ♗d7
4 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7
5 c4

White plans to achieve a Maroczy-like setup after d4. By preventing it radically (i.e. with 5...e5) Black would compromise his bishop. Instead 5 0-0 ♘f6 6 ♖e1 ♘c6 7 c3 e6 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 d5 10 e5 ♘e4 is quite harmless; here the f8-bishop is a good piece.

5 ... ♘c6

The committal 5...e5 isn't played too often nowadays, although the advantage of the better bishop in a closed position is rather ephemeral and it's very difficult to convert it into something more tangible.

6 ♘c3

6 0-0 ♘c5!? 7 d3 e6, followed by ...♘e7-c6, doesn't cause Black too much trouble, but lately there has been some excitement after 6 d4. This has long been considered a tacit draw offer due to 6...♕g4?! 7 d5 ♕xc4+ 8 ♗e3 ♘d4 9 ♕a4+ b5 (9...♔d8!? 10 ♘bd2 ♘c2+ 11 ♔e2 ♕g6 12 ♖ab1 ♘xe3 13 fxe3! ♕xg2+ 14 ♔d3 is a line given by Finkel; White's huge lead in development more than compensates for his pawn deficit) 10 ♕a6 ♘c2+ 11 ♔d2 (11 ♔d1!?, followed by ♘bd2 and ♖c1, has also been tested and is just as dangerous) 11...♕d3+ 12 ♔c1 ♖b8 13 ♕xa7 ♖d8, when 14 ♕b7? ♘xa1 led to a perpetual in Stean-Geller, Moscow 1975. However, 14 ♖d1! ♕g6 (14...♕xc4? 15 b3 ♕e4 16 ♘c3 ♕g6 17 ♘xb5 ♘xa1 18 ♘c7+ ♔d7 19 ♘e6+ mates) 15 ♘h4 ♕c4 16 ♘c3 ♕xh4 17 ♔xc2 gives White a large advantage; for example, 17...b4 18 ♕a4+ ♖d7 19 ♕a8+ ♖d8 20 ♕c6+ ♖d7 21 ♘a4! ♕xc4+ 22 ♔d2. Therefore Black is well advised to play 6...cxd4, which is liable to transpose into the game continuation.

6 ... ♘f6

One of the reasons why White delays castling is that after 6...♘e5?! he has the dangerous 7 d4! ♘xf3+ 8 gxf3 cxd4 9 ♕xd4 e6 10 ♗e3 ♘e7 11 0-0-0! ♘c6 12 ♕d2 ♖d8 13 ♖hg1 with a strong initiative, Rublevsky-Becerra Rivero, Lucerne Wcht 1997. Kasparov himself has introduced the ambitious and risky 6...g6 7 d4 ♗g7!? 8 d5! (the only consistent move; after 8 ♗e3 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘f6 10 f3 0-0 Black is OK, as White's bishop belongs on g5 in this line) 8...♗xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♘a5 10 ♘d2 f6 (after 10...e5 11 0-0 Black has problems keeping the position closed, as f4 is coming quickly; e.g., 11...♘e7 12 f4 exf4 13 ♖xf4 g5 14 ♖f6 ♘g6 15 e5! ♘xe5 16 ♘e4 ♘axc4 17 ♖e6+! ♔f8, Magomedov-Isaev, Dushanbe 1999, and now even 18 ♗xg5!? fxe6 19 ♕h5 would give White a tremendous attack) 11 f4 b6!? 12 0-0 ♘h6 with a murky position; it's important for Black to retain both castling options.

7 0-0

7 d4 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 and now:

1) 8...♕g4 9 ♕xg4 ♘xg4 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♗f4 and now Black must be very alert as White has a slight lead in development. After, for example, 11...♖b8 12 h3 (12 b3 is too soft: 12...g6 13 ♖c1 ♗g7) 12...♘f6 (12...♘e5!?) 13 0-0-0 ♘d7 14 ♖he1 ♖b4 (14...g6 15 e5! dxe5 16 ♖xe5 is also unpleasant for Black) 15 b3 g6 16 ♗e3 ♗g7 17 ♘a4 c5 18 f4! White prepares e5 and retains the initiative.

2) Thus 8...g6 is more prudent, although 9 ♘de2!? ♗g7 10 f3 enables White to avoid the game continuation.

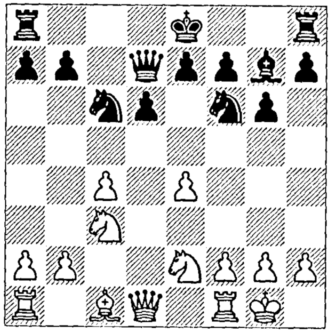
7 ... g6

The somewhat passive 7...e6 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♗e7 is less popular, while 7...♘e5 is now slightly weaker, as Black has already committed the other knight to f6.

8 d4 cxd4
9 ♘xd4 ♗g7
10 ♘de2 *(D)*

The knight must leave d4 to meet the ...♘xc4 threat.

B



10 ... ♕e6!?

This important novelty was Krush's recommendation. Black wants to destroy White's centre at any cost. Although subsequent practice has shown that this move can't be considered an ultimate remedy, it certainly leads to more exciting positions than the ordinary 10...0-0 11 f3 a6 (after 11...♖fd8 12 ♗g5 h6 13 ♗h4! e6 14 f4 White stops the planned ...d5 and has a slight advantage) 12 a4 ♕d8!? 13 ♗e3 ♕a5:

1) 14 ♔h1 ♘d7 (worse is 14...♖fd8?! 15 ♘d5! and in Rublevsky-Gelfand, Polanica Zdroj 1998 Black was forced to exchange the knight, as 15...♘d7? loses on the spot to 16 b4 ♘xb4 17 ♗d2) 15 ♖b1 ♘de5 16 b3 ♘xc4 17 bxc4 ♗xc3 18 ♗b6 ♕c5 19 f4 ♕g7 20 e5 ♗b4 21 exd6 exd6 22 f5 ♖ae8 gives White some compensation for the pawn, but certainly not more than that, Oral-Dworakowska, Koszalin 1999.

2) A better attempt for White to profit from his space advantage is to do without prophylaxis and play the immediate 14 ♖b1!? ♘d7 15 ♕d2.

11 ♘d5

Kasparov accepts the challenge, but he hardly had any choice. After 11 ♕b3 0-0 (11...♖c8!? 12 ♕xb7 0-0 also deserves attention) 12 ♘f4 ♕c8 13 ♘fd5 ♘xd5 14 ♘xd5 e6 15 ♘e3 ♘e5! 16 ♗d2 ♕c6 17 f3 f5! 18 exf5 gxf5 19 f4 ♘d7 20 ♗c3 ♘c5 21 ♕c2 ♖f7 22 ♔h1 ♘e4 23 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 Black controls the centre with a very comfortable position, Velička-Dydyshko, Czech Cht 1999.

11 ... ♕xc4

Otherwise after f3 Black's last move would lack sense.

12 ♘c7+ ♔d7
13 ♘xa8 ♕xe4

The knight can't escape, so Black helps himself to another pawn. 13...♖xa8?! 14 ♕b3 ♘e5 15 ♗g5!? (15 ♘d4 ♖c8 16 ♖d1 ♘xc4 17 ♕a4+ ♔d8 18 ♕xa7 b6 is unclear, but 15 ♘c3 ♕c6 16 ♗g5 ♘xc4 17 ♖ac1 is also dangerous for Black) only furthers White's development and after 15...b6 (15...♘xc4 is weaker in view of 16 ♖ac1 ♖c8 17 ♘c3 ♕c6 18 ♘b5) 16 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♘c3 ♕xe4 18 ♘d5 he has a marked initiative.

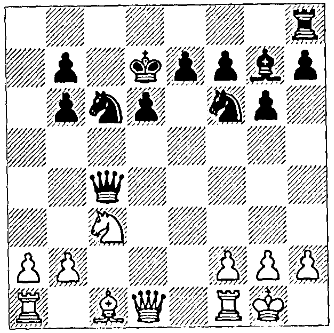
14 ♘b6+!

Ruining Black's pawn-structure is obligatory to give White objects of attack. He would have none after 14 b3 ♕a6 15 ♗b2 ♖xa8, when Black's solid position and pawn-centre give him chances for a clear advantage once he safeguards his king.

14 ... axb6
15 ♘c3 *(D)*

White must prepare the development of his bishop. This move is better than 15 ♗e3 ♘d5 or 15 ♗g5 ♘e4.

B



15 ... ♖a8

It is time to take stock. Generally speaking White should avoid exchanges, as they lessen the potential danger for Black's still vulnerable king. As indicated above, the long-term prospects are with Black once he coordinates his forces. However, this is more easily said than done. The text-move is very logical: Black occupies an open file and intends to evacuate his king, but the rook might also be needed in the centre. To be more concrete, Black should first prevent ♘a4, which would force his king to the weakened flank where it doesn't belong:

1) Interesting is 15...e6 16 ♗e3 (16 ♘a4?! ♘d5 makes little sense for White, as after 17 ♕xd5? Black has 17...♕xf1+) 16...♘d5 17 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 18 ♕c2! b5 19 ♖ad1 ♕c4 20 ♕d2 ♕b4 (20...d5!? is better) 21 ♕d3 d5 22 ♖c1 ♕a4, Rublevsky-Motylev, Yugoslav Cht (Novi Sad) 2000. Now 23 ♖c5!? b4 24 ♖b5 ♔c8 25 a3 is quite unpleasant for Black.

2) My personal favourite is 15...b5!? 16 ♗e3 (16 ♗g5 ♘e4 17 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 18 ♕b3 ♕c4 favours Black; Krush's suggestion 16 ♖e1!? b4 17 ♘a4 ♕b5 18 a3 e6 19 axb4 ♘xb4 is interesting, but also inconclusive) 16...♖d8! (16...b4 17 ♘a4 is exactly what Black doesn't want, while 16...♖a8 transposes to the note to White's 16th move) and now 17 ♖c1 allows 17...b4 18 ♘a4 ♕b5 with a safe position.

16 a4

Quick development is preferable; later Mr ♗b5+ Rublevsky came up with 16 ♗e3! b5 17 ♖c1 ♔e8 (here Black can't play ...b4 immediately) 18 b3!? (18 a3 b4 19 b3 and now, rather than 19...♕h4? 20 ♘b5 ♔d7 21 ♗c5 ♕h5 22 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 23 ♗xb4 ♘f4 24 ♖c4, when White won a pawn in Rublevsky-Van Wely, Frankfurt rpd 2000, 19...♕a6 is OK for Black) 18...♕g4 19 f3 ♕h5 20 a4 bxa4 (Black's pawns were fatally weak after 20...b4?! 21 ♘b5 ♔f8 22 ♗f2 ♕d5 23 ♕c2 ♕f5 24 ♕xf5 gxf5 25 ♖fd1 in Rublevsky-Bo.Vučković, Yugoslav Cup (Herčeg Novi) 2000) 21 bxa4 and White is better.

16 ... ♘e4

This move initiates far-reaching complications. 16...♔e8?! 17 ♘b5 and ♗e3 is not ideal for Black, since White develops his forces with tempi and targets b6. However, Black had many alternatives to the text-move; e.g., 16...d5 or 16...♘d4 17 ♗e3 ♘b3 18 ♖a3 ♘c5, while another alternative is 16...♘b4!? 17 ♗e3 (17 ♗g5 h6 18 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 19 ♕f3 and 17 ♕f3!? ♕c6 18 ♕h3+ e6 19 ♗h6 are also possible and unclear) 17...♘fd5 18 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 19 ♖c1 ♘xe3 20 fxe3 ♕c4 21 ♕b3 ♗h6. Black's king finds a relatively safe haven in front of his pawns and forcing a draw with 22 ♕b5+ ♔e6 23 ♕b3+ (Black can't reply 23...♕d5? in view of 24 ♖c4) is a sensible option.

17 ♘xe4

17 ♘d5?! only wastes time due to 17...♗d4.

17 ... ♕xe4
18 ♕b3

White is starting to create concrete threats.

18 ... f5!?

Kasparov admitted that this move, which radically solves any future problems with f7, came as a surprise. Other ideas:

1) After 18...♘d4 19 ♕xf7 ♘c2 20 ♗d2! (the threat was ...♘e1 and 20 ♕xg7 ♘xa1 21 ♗d2 ♘c2 gives Black an advantage) 20...♘xa1 21 ♖e1 ♕h4 22 ♕d5! ♖f8 23 ♕xb7+ ♔e8 24 ♕c6+ ♔f7 25 ♕d5+! ♔e8 26 ♕b5+ (White protects b2 first) 26...♔f7 27 ♖xa1 ♕d4 28 ♕b3+ (28 ♗c3 is weaker in view of 28...♕c5 29 ♕b3+ ♔e8!) 28...♔e8 29 ♗e3 ♕xb2 30 ♕xb2 ♗xb2 31 ♖b1 Black doesn't have quite full equality.

2) More viable is 18...e6 19 ♕xb6 (19 ♗e3 is weaker in view of 19...♕b4 20 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 21 ♗xb6 ♘d3) 19...♘d4 (after 19...♕b4 20 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 21 ♖a3!? White has chances to convert his advantage gradually into victory) and now:

2a) 20 ♗d2 ♖a6 21 ♕b4 ♘e2+ (21...♕c6 is weak due to 22 a5 ♘c2 23 ♕f4!) 22 ♔h1 ♕xb4 23 ♗xb4 ♖b6 (23...♖c6!?) 24 ♖fe1 ♖xb4 25

♖xe2 d5 and with his strong bishop and central pawns only Black can play for a win.

2b) Better is 20 ♔h1!? ♖a6 21 ♕b4 ♕c6 22 ♖d1 ♖b6 (22...♘c2 again runs into 23 ♕f4) 23 ♕d2 ♔e8. Black's active pieces give him reasonable compensation, but White's chances are better than in line '2a', as the queens remain on the board.

19 ♗g5

Now after 19 ♕xb6 ♘d4! 20 ♔h1 (not 20 ♗d2?, when 20...♖a6 21 ♕b4 ♕c6! threatens ...♖b6 or ...♘c2 and wins back the exchange) Black can practically force a draw with 20...♘c2 21 ♕b5+ ♕c6 22 ♕xc6+ bxc6 23 ♖a2 ♘b4, because 24 ♖a3 ♘c2 25 ♖h3 ♖xa4 26 ♖xh7 ♗f6 is dangerous for White – the b-pawn will fall and Black's central phalanx is very impressive. As 19 ♗e3 gets White nowhere in view of 19...♕b4 20 ♕f7 ♗e5!? (20...♕xb2 21 ♖ab1 ♕f6 is equal), he instead strives for maximum activity.

19 ... ♕b4

This is playing with fire, but 19...♘d4 20 ♕f7 ♘e2+ 21 ♔h1 ♗xb2 is not fully clear either:

1) 22 ♖ab1 ♗d4 23 f3 ♕e5 24 ♖fe1 f4!? 25 ♗h4 (25 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 26 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 27 ♖xe2+ ♔d7 is about equal) 25...♖c8 is unconvincing for White: 26 ♕a2 ♕h5 or 26 ♖bd1 ♗c3.

2) 22 ♖a2 ♗d4 (22...♗c3? loses to 23 f3 ♕e5 24 ♕c4) 23 f3!? (23 ♕xh7 ♖h8 24 ♕xe7+ ♕xe7 25 ♗xe7 ♘c3 26 ♖d2 ♗e5 27 f4 ♔xe7 28 fxe5 dxe5 is OK for Black; a draw is the most likely result) 23...♕e5 24 ♗h4 ♘c3 25 ♖e1 ♗e3 26 ♗xe7 ♕d5! and Black survives the assault.

20 ♕f7 ♗e5

20...♗xb2? 21 ♖ab1 is unsavoury for Black. The other greedy move, 20...♕xb2, is more complicated:

1) 21 ♖ab1 ♕d4 22 ♖fd1 (22 ♖fe1 ♗e5 gets White nowhere) 22...♖f8! 23 ♕b3 ♕c5 24 ♗e3 ♗d4 25 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 26 ♕xb6 ♕xb6 27 ♖xb6 ♔c7 28 ♖db1 ♖b8 29 a5 ♘e6! 30 ♖e1 ♔d7 31 a6 ♘c5 is drawish.

2) 21 ♖fe1 ♗e5 22 ♖ad1!, as pointed out by Krush, is more testing. After 22...♖xa4 23 ♕xh7 ♖a2 24 ♖f1 ♗d4 25 ♖d2 ♕b3 26 ♖xa2 ♕xa2 27 ♕xg6 ♕d5 28 ♗e3 a similar position arises as in the game, but White manages to exchange the powerful black bishop.

21 h3 ♖xa4

The consistent move. Although 21...♖h8 can't be discarded outright, Black understandably doesn't want his rook to play such a passive role.

22 ♖xa4

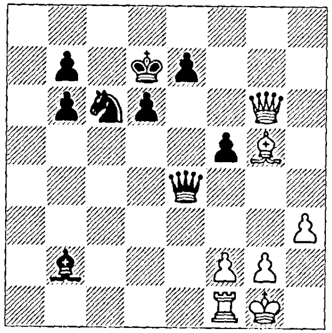
22 ♖ae1 is met by 22...♕c4! 23 ♕xh7 ♕e6, defending the vital g6-pawn. After 24 f4 ♗d4+ 25 ♔h1 ♗e3 Black's centralized pieces are untouchable (26 ♖f3? fails to the neat 26...♗xf4!) and he is better.

22 ... ♕xa4

23 ♕xh7 ♗xb2

24 ♕xg6 ♕e4 *(D)*

W



Although the material balance in the previous ten moves hasn't changed, White has managed to activate his forces, his king is safer and his h-pawn is potentially threatening. However, even though Black is fighting for a draw, his pieces are very active and the b-pawn also shouldn't be underestimated.

25 ♕f7 ♗d4

Eminently logical, but 25...d5!? 26 ♖d1 ♗d4 was a serious alternative, shutting out White's queen.

26 ♕b3!

Prophylaxis is indicated. 26 h4?! should not be met by 26...♘b4 due to 27 h5 with the idea 27...♘d3? 28 ♗xe7!. Instead after 26...d5 or even 26...b5 27 ♕b3 b4 Black's passed pawn is really dangerous.

26 ... f4

Black prevents ♗e3 and keeps his bishop on the crucial long diagonal.

27 ♕f7 ♗e5

28 h4

White can force a repetition with 28 ♕b3 ♗d4 29 ♕f7, but Kasparov has greater ambitions.

28 ... b5

29 h5 ♕c4

A sharp alternative to this natural move was 29...b4 30 h6 ♕d3, and now:

1) 31 h7 b3 32 ♗xf4 and Black has two options:

1a) 32...♗h8 33 ♕g8 b2 34 ♕xh8 ♘d4!? (34...♕xf1+ 35 ♔xf1 b1♕+ 36 ♔e2 ♕e4+ 37 ♗e3 ♘e5 also draws: Black forces a perpetual) 35 ♖e1 (35 ♔h2? loses to 35...♕xf1 36 ♕xd4 b1♕ 37 h8♕ ♕h1+ 38 ♔g3 ♕g6+) 35...♘e2+ 36 ♔h2 b1♕ 37 ♖xb1 ♕xb1 38 g3 ♕g1+ 39 ♔h3 ♘xf4+ 40 gxf4 ♕h1+ and again Black has a perpetual.

1b) 32...♗d4 33 ♗e3 b2 34 ♕a2! (34 ♗xd4? loses to 34...♕xf1+ 35 ♔xf1 b1♕+ 36 ♔e2 ♕e4+!, as interposing the bishop leads to mate) 34...♗h8 35 ♕b1 ♕xb1 36 ♖xb1 ♘b4 37 ♔f1 ♘c2 38 ♔e2 ♘a3 39 ♖xb2 ♗xb2 40 ♗c1 and the bishop endgame should be a draw.

2) More ambitious is 31 ♗xf4 ♘d8 32 ♕h5 ♗xf4 33 h7 ♗e5 34 ♕xe5 dxe5 35 h8♕ ♘c6, but the advanced and well-supported passed pawn gives Black counterplay.

30 ♕f5+

If White wants to win, he can't avoid the exchange of queens, but naturally he doesn't unite Black's pawns.

30 ... ♕e6

31 ♕xe6+

After 31 ♕d3?!, 31...♕g4 (31...b4!? is a daring winning attempt) forces a draw: 32 ♕xb5 f3 33 ♕xb7+ ♔d8 34 ♕b6+ ♔d7.

31 ... ♔xe6

32 g3 *(D)*

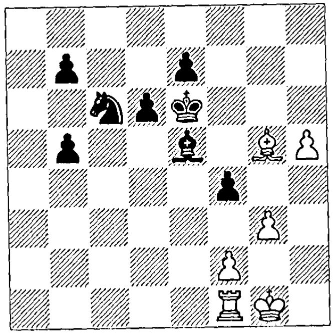
32 ... fxg3?!

This doesn't lose, but intuition says the f4-pawn isn't worth saving and giving White connected passed pawns is not ideal. After 32...b4!? (32...♘d4 is similar) 33 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 34 gxf4 ♘d4 35 h6 ♔f7 Black should easily save the resulting endgame; e.g., 36 ♖d1 ♘e2+ 37 ♔f1 ♘xf4 38 ♖d4 ♘g6 39 ♖xb4 ♔g8! 40 ♖xb7 ♔h7.

33 fxg3 b4

The World team considered the piece sacrifice 33...♗xg3?! 34 h6 ♗e5 35 h7 ♗g7 (the threat was ♗f6 and after 35...♗h8 36 ♖f8 ♘e5

B



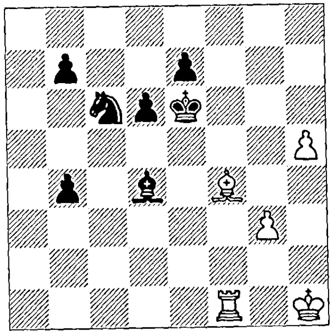
37 ♖xh8 ♘f3+ 38 ♔f2 ♘xg5 39 ♔e3 b4 40 ♔f4 b3 41 ♔xg5 b2 42 ♖f8 White should win) 36 ♖f8 b4 (36...♘e5? loses on the spot to 37 ♗h6, while 36...♘d4?! is also weak, due to 37 ♔f2) 37 h8♕ ♗xh8 38 ♖xh8 too committal. The text-move keeps Black's drawing chances intact.

34 ♗f4 ♗d4+

Black needs his bishop to fight the enemy pawns, so what could be more natural than this check? However, Kasparov afterwards indicated that 34...♗h8! is an easier draw; the point is that after 35 g4 ♘d4 the fork on e2 is going to cost White a tempo in the pawn race anyway.

35 ♔h1! *(D)*

B



This paradoxical move is the only way to keep White's slim winning chances alive. Below we will see the drawbacks of the seemingly more logical replies.

35 ... b3

Another logical reaction, which, however, again plays into White's hands. Kasparov stated that 35...♘e5 36 ♗xe5 dxe5!? was better. A simple sample line is 37 g4 e4 38 g5 e3 39 h6 ♗c3! 40 ♖f3 (40 h7 e2 {or 40...b3} 41 ♖e1 ♔f7 42 ♖xe2 b3 is also a draw) 40...e2 41 ♖e3+ ♔f5 42 ♖xe2 ♔xg5 and White will lose his last pawn.

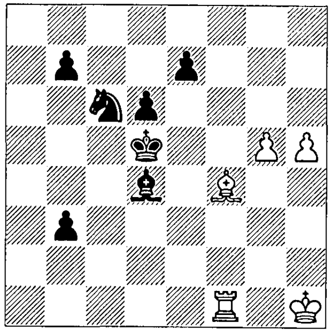
36 g4 ♔d5

The reason for 35 ♔h1! becomes clear after 36...b2 37 g5 ♘b4 38 g6 ♘d3 39 h6! b1♕ (with the king on g2, 39...♘xf4+ would win; now 39...♘xf4 loses to 40 g7 ♔f7 41 ♖xf4+ ♗f6 42 ♖f1 ♔g8 43 ♖g1 b1♕ 44 ♖xb1 ♗g5 45 h7+! and ♖g1) 40 ♖xb1 ♘xf4 41 ♖e1+! ♗e5 42 g7 ♔f7 43 ♖g1 ♗xg7 44 ♖xg7+ ♔f6 45 ♖g8 and the h-pawn queens.

After the immediate 36...♘b4 37 g5 ♘d3 38 h6 ♘xf4 39 ♖xf4 b2 (with the king on h2, 39...♗e5 would win) 40 ♖f1 ♗e3!? (40...b1♕ 41 ♖xb1 ♔f5 42 ♖b5+ ♔g6 43 ♔g2 and the king will support the pawns just in time) 41 h7 ♗d4 42 ♔g2 Black is paralysed, as by sacrificing his b-pawn he can win only one of White's pawns. Passive defence loses due to zugzwang: 42...♗c3 43 ♔g3 b5 44 ♔g4 b4 45 ♔h5 b3 46 ♔g6 d5 47 ♖b1 and now Black has to allow ♖e1+, followed by ♔f7 and g6-g7.

37 g5 *(D)*

B



37 ... e6!

The World comes up with an excellent defence. Black needs both the open long diagonal and the f5-square for his knight. The 'energetic' 37...e5? loses by force: 38 ♗c1 b2 (38...e4 loses to 39 g6 ♘e7 40 ♗g5) 39 ♗xb2 ♗xb2 40 h6 e4 (40...♘e7 41 ♖f6! e4 42 h7 ♗xf6 43 gxf6 ♘g6 44 f7) 41 g6 ♘e7 (after 41...e3 42 g7 ♘e7 43 ♖f7 Black also loses) 42 g7 ♔e6 43 ♖f8 ♗f6 44 g8♕+ ♘xg8 45 h7! and White will queen his remaining pawn. 37...b2 38 g6 ♘d8 39 h6 ♘e6 40 ♗g5! is also hopeless for Black, as there is no defence against ♗xe7-f8 and g7.

38 h6

38 g6?! is weak because after 38...♘e7 39 ♖d1!? (39 ♗g5 ♘f5 40 ♔g2 b2! 41 h6 ♔c4 and Black's direct plan ...♔b3-a2 is too strong) 39...♔c4 40 ♗xd6 ♘f5 White's pawns are stopped and Black can become ambitious.

38 ... ♘e7

39 ♖d1 e5

39...♔c4 is insufficient due to 40 h7 ♘g6 41 ♗xd6 b2 42 ♗a3!, with the point that 42...♔b3 loses to 43 ♗xb2 ♗xb2 44 ♖d6.

40 ♗e3

Now a queen endgame arises by force.

40 ... ♔c4

41 ♗xd4 exd4

42 ♔g2 b2

43 ♔f3 ♔c3

44 h7 ♘g6

45 ♔e4 ♔c2

46 ♖h1 d3

46...b1♕? is a serious mistake, as White has time for 47 ♖xb1 ♔xb1 48 ♔xd4 and ♔e4-f5.

47 ♔f5 b1♕!

Black had a large choice between various versions of the endgame that arises:

1) Weak is 47...♘h8? 48 g6 d2 (after 48...b1♕ 49 ♖xb1 ♔xb1 50 g7 d2 51 gxh8♕ d1♕ 52 ♕g8 White's king will hide on b8) 49 g7 d1♕ 50 ♖xd1 ♔xd1 51 gxh8♕ b1♕+ 52 ♔e6 ♕e4+ 53 ♔d7. White's passed pawn is too far advanced and will promote shortly, as Black's pawns provide shelter for White's king.

2) Similar to the game, but slightly less accurate, is 47...d2 48 ♔xg6 b1♕ (after 48...d1♕ 49 ♖xd1 ♔xd1 50 h8♕ b1♕+ 51 ♔f7 Black's queen is passive and the king hides from the checks anyway; e.g., 51...♕a2+ 52 ♔e7 ♕e2+ 53 ♔d8) 49 h8♕ d1♕ 50 ♖xd1 ♕xd1. After the text-move Black reaches nearly the same position, but his king will be closer to its ideal square, a1.

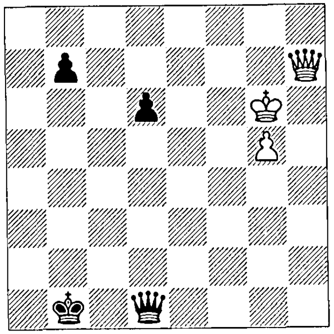
48 ♖xb1 ♔xb1

49 ♔xg6 d2

50 h8♕ d1♕

51 ♕h7! *(D)*

B



Formally Black is a pawn up, but White is playing for a win due to his more advanced passed pawn. However, precise defence should save the game, as it's not easy for White's king to hide from the typical barrage of checks.

51 ... b5?!

To exhaust this position analytically is practically impossible for a human player, and even the strongest computers still couldn't come up with definite conclusions. We have already said that Black's king belongs on a1 in this type of endgame, since there it is better covered not only from checks, but especially from interpositions forcing won pawn endgames. Therefore 51...♔a1! 52 ♕g7+ (52 ♕xb7 d5!? and 52 ♔h6 ♕d2 also shouldn't be enough for White to win) 52...♔a2 is stronger. However, here technical problems intervened and allegedly it was only 'vote stuffing' that decided in favour of the second-rate text-move.

52 ♔f6+ ♔b2

Again 52...♔a1 or even 52...♔c1!? was more to the point. Now Kasparov improves his prospects with a strong queen manoeuvre.

53 ♕h2+ ♔a1

54 ♕f4!

Now White's king is safe and g6 is in the air, while Black's pawns are still stopped.

54 ... b4?

If Black could make a timely sacrifice of both his pawns, then he would be able to draw effortlessly by using the definitive tablebase of ♕+♙ versus ♕ endgames. (We must remember this is not an over-the-board game and especially in its final phase powerful computers were in permanent use.) However, it is not so simple to arrange such a sacrifice correctly. The text-move doesn't achieve this goal and is probably the decisive mistake. Black can also use his pawns as instruments of counterplay, and in this respect Bacrot's recommendation 54...♕d5!? 55 g6 b4 deserves serious attention. After 56 g7 (now 56 ♕xb4 ♕e5+ 57 ♔f7 ♕f5+ 58 ♔g7 ♕e5+ 59 ♔h6 ♕h8+ leads to a perpetual, while 56 ♕f1+ ♔a2 57 ♕f2+ ♔a3 58 ♕g3+ b3 59 g7 ♕d4+! 60 ♔e7 ♕e4+ is similar to the main line) 56...b3 57 ♕a4+ (57 ♕f1+ ♔a2 58 ♕g1 ♕e5+! 59 ♔f7 ♕d5+ 60 ♔e7 ♕g8 and the b-pawn is too far advanced for White to improve his position) 57...♔b2! (not 57...♔b1? 58 ♕g4 ♕e5+ 59 ♔f7 ♕d5+ 60 ♕e6 ♕f3+ 61 ♔e7 ♕b7+ 62 ♔f6, when the pawn queens) 58 ♕g4 ♕e5+ 59 ♔f7 ♕d5+ Black will again be able to play ...♕g8 at a suitable moment and there is no direct win in sight.

55 ♕xb4 ♕f3+

56 ♔g7 d5

57 ♕d4+ ♔b1

58 g6 ♕e4?!

This quickly loses by force. 58...♕f5! was considerably more resilient, although Kasparov immediately afterwards published 24 KB (!) of analysis to prove he was winning anyway. His main line runs 59 ♔h6 ♕e6 60 ♕d1+ ♔b2 61 ♕d2+ ♔b1 62 ♕d4! with zugzwang; Black is forced to make a concession: 62...♔a2 (62...♔c2 63 ♔g5! ♕e7+ 64 ♕f6 ♕e3+ 65 ♔g4! ♕e4+ 66 ♔g3 ♕e3+ 67 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 68 ♔f2 and g7 wins) 63 ♔g5 ♕e7+ 64 ♕f6 ♕e3+ 65 ♕f4 ♕g1+ 66 ♔f6 ♕b6+ 67 ♔f7 ♕b7+ 68 ♔g8! ♕c8+ 69 ♕f8 ♕e6+ 70 ♔g7 ♕e5+ 71 ♕f6 ♕c7+ 72 ♕f7 ♕c3+ 73 ♔f8 ♕c8+ 74 ♕e8 ♕f5+ 75 ♔e7! (75 ♔g8 ♔b2! 76 g7 d4 77 ♕b8+ ♔c1 is only a draw, as White can't free his king) 75...♕g5+ 76 ♔d7 d4 77 ♕f7+ ♔a1 78 g7 ♕b5+ 79 ♔c7 ♕c5+ 80 ♔b7 ♕b5+ 81 ♔a8 ♕c6+ 82 ♕b7 ♕e8+ 83 ♔a7 ♕g8 84 ♕a6+ ♔b2 85 ♕b5+ ♔c3 86 ♕c5+ ♔d3 87 ♕f8 ♕a2+ 88 ♔b8 ♕h2+ 89 ♔c8 ♕h3+ 90 ♔d8 ♕h4+ 91 ♕e7. White's king has finally found a hideout and the pawn promotes after 91...♕g4 92 ♕a3+ ♔e4 93 ♕f8!.

59 ♕g1+ ♔b2

60 ♕f2+! ♔c1

61 ♔f6 d4

62 g7 1-0

More than 50% of the World's votes were for resignation. The lines are much simpler now: 62...♕c6+ 63 ♔g5 ♕d5+ 64 ♕f5 ♕g2+ (after 64...♕d8+ 65 ♔h6 ♕g8 66 ♕c5+ Black loses the d-pawn and the game) 65 ♕g4 ♕d5+ 66 ♔h4 ♕h1+ (66...♕g8 67 ♕f4+ ♔c2 68 ♕f8 ♕h7+ 69 ♔g5) 67 ♔g3 ♕e1+ 68 ♔f4 ♕d2+ 69 ♔f5 ♕c2+ 70 ♔g5 ♕c5+ 71 ♔h4 and the pawn is unstoppable.

Summary

White's initial dreams of nursing and increasing a pleasant space advantage were shattered by the bold 10...♕e6!?, which completely changed the character of the position. The series of forced moves ended with 15 ♘c3, leaving Black with the difficult choice between numerous plausible alternatives. To look a bit ahead, this was in general typical for the whole game: while Kasparov more than once made clearly the best or 'only' moves, the team of consultants very often had more seemingly equivalent options. As the notes indicate, 15...♖a8 was not an ideal continuation; getting rid of a potential weakness with 15...b5!? was preferable. Also in the following phase of the game a few ambitious decisions (16...♘e4, 18...f5!?), while objectively leaving the equilibrium undisturbed, gave White concrete play and chances to wrest the initiative. Kasparov himself claimed that after the opening he was fighting for a draw, but by 28 h4 he was showing his increasing confidence and avoided a possible repetition.

At first the resulting endgame was very exciting and highly tactical. The World played a few natural but inaccurate moves that missed easier draws (32...b4!?, 34...♗h8! and 35...♘e5), only to find the brilliant 36...♔d5 and 37...e6! to keep the game going. By correctly dividing the defensive and offensive tasks between his remaining pieces, Black created enough counterplay to force Kasparov to go for a slightly better and very technical queen endgame. However, from 51 ♕h7! onwards White's play was a model of precision; in particular, the quiet improvement of his position before advancing his pawn was impressive (54 ♕f4!). On the other hand, Black went astray more than once and finally squandered his last chances with 54...b4? (arguably with 58...♕e4?!). The final part of the game saw the difference in the coordination and direction of the computer support of the two sides playing a major, if not decisive role.

Game 47

Vishy Anand – Peter Leko

Linares 2000

Grünfeld Defence, Exchange Variation [D85]

1 d4 ♘f6
2 ♘f3 g6
3 c4 ♗g7
4 ♘c3 d5
5 cxd5 ♘xd5
6 e4 ♘xc3
7 bxc3 c5
8 ♖b1 0-0
9 ♗e2 cxd4

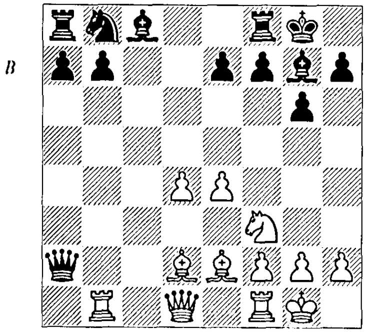
This continuation has firmly established itself as the main line, with the likes of Kasparov, Anand and Shirov defending Black's cause. The line 9...♘c6 10 d5 ♘e5 11 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 12 ♕d2 e6 13 f4 was still fairly popular in the mid-1990s, but it has lately come upon hard times. The fact that Black has more often than not felt it necessary to resort to the extravagant 13...♗c7!? is enough in itself to scare off many a staunch Grünfeld supporter, not to mention that this move doesn't solve all Black's problems in any case.

10 cxd4 ♕a5+
11 ♗d2

White sacrifices a pawn for a lead in development and a strong pawn-centre. This is the only way he can fight for an advantage, as practice has shown that Black has nothing to fear in the endgame after 11 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 12 ♗xd2 b6 (or 12...e6).

11 ... ♕xa2
12 0-0 *(D)*
12 ... ♘d7!?

Another important branching point. Black's move is extremely risky and despite the successful outcome of this game, nobody has dared to repeat it since. Leko had previously tried the equally double-edged 12...a5, while 12...b6 can hardly be called refuted either, but undoubtedly the safest and most popular option is 12...♗g4. Black continues his development and at the same time puts White's centre under pressure. This variation also has the best reputation thanks to its numerous followers among the world elite. After 13 ♗g5 h6 14 ♗e3 ♘c6 15 d5 ♗xf3 (15...♘e5?! 16 ♖xb7 e6 17 d6 ♖fd8 18 ♖e1 ♗xf3 19 gxf3 ♕a5 20 ♖f1 ♗f8 21 d7 ♕a2 22 ♗b5 a6 23 ♗a4! ♘xf3+ 24 ♔g2 ♘e5 25 ♗b6 ♕c4 26 ♕d4 ♕xd4 27 ♗xd4 ♘d3 28 ♗c6! ♘c5 29 ♖c7 ♗d6 30 ♗xc5 ♗xc7 31 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 32 ♗e7 and in Khalifman-Leko, Linares 2000, Black was lost, because 32...♗d8 fails to 33 ♖c1!; this game was played two rounds later than our main game) 16 ♗xf3 (16 gxf3!? ♘d4 17 ♗d3 ♕a3! 18 f4 ♕d6 19 ♖xb7 ♖fb8 20 ♕b1 ♘f3+ 21 ♔g2 ♘h4+ 22 ♔h1, Krasenkow-Svidler, Polanica Zdroj 2000, is an interesting idea, but after 22...e6!? Black has no reason to complain) 16...♘e5 17 ♖xb7 e6 (17...a5!? also gives Black enough play to hold the game; a rapid march of the passed a-pawn is altogether typical for this line) 18 dxe6 ♕xe6 19 ♖xa7 ♘xf3+ 20 ♕xf3 ♖xa7 21 ♗xa7 ♖e8 22 ♖e1 f5 23 ♕e3 fxe4 24 f3 ♕c4 25 fxe4 ♖e7 26 ♔h1 ♕c3 27 ♗c5 ♖c7 28 ♖c1 ♕xe3 29 ♗xe3 ♖xc1+ 30 ♗xc1 h5 the resulting endgame is a dead draw, Bunzmann-Leko, Hamburg (5) 1999. It remains a mystery why Leko deviated from this encounter in the aforementioned game with Khalifman.



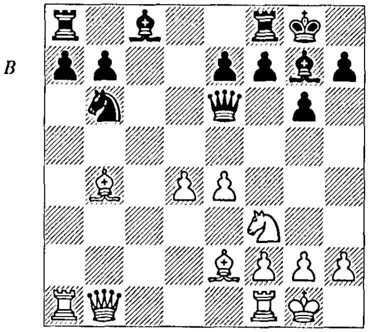
13 ♖e1

Anand immediately leaves the well-trodden path, 13 ♗b4 ♘b6, which still remains playable despite Black's meagre practical results. The later course of our game indicates that in this case Leko possibly intended to challenge White's centre with a timely ...f5 advance:

1) The least dangerous seems to be 14 ♘e5 f6 15 ♘c4 (15 ♘d3 ♕f7 16 d5 f5 17 ♘c5? fxe4 18 d6 ♖d8! 19 ♘xe4 ♗f5 20 ♗d3 ♗xe4 21 ♗xe4 exd6 22 f4 d5 brought Black total success in Shirov-Leko, Dortmund 1998) 15...♘xc4 16 ♖a1 ♘b2 17 ♖xa2 ♘xd1 18 ♗c4+ ♔h8 19 ♖xd1 ♖d8 (19...a6!?, with the idea 20 f3 ♖e8 21 ♗b5 ♗e6! 22 d5 ♗xd5, is also possible; Black achieves equality) 20 ♗xe7 ♖e8 21 ♗c5 ♖xe4 22 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 23 ♗xa7 ♗f8 24 f3 ♖e3! 25 d5 ♖c3 26 ♗b5 ♖b3 holds for Black according to Lagunov.

2) 14 h3!? and now 14...♗d7 15 ♖a1 ♕e6 16 ♗d3 f6?! 17 ♗c5! ♖fc8 18 d5 ♕f7 19 ♗xb6 axb6 20 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 21 ♕b3 gave White a large advantage in Gelfand-Ma.Tseitlin, Tel-Aviv 1999. However, 14...f5!? promises Black counterplay.

3) Black has to make a tough decision after 14 ♖a1 ♕e6 15 ♕b1 *(D)*:



3a) 15...♗d7 16 ♖a5 ♘c8 (after 16...♗c6 17 ♗d3 ♕d7 18 d5 ♗a4 19 ♗c5 ♖fc8 20 ♕b4 e6 21 ♗d4 exd5 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 23 ♕d4+ f6 24 e5 ♕e7 25 ♖e1!? White has attacking chances for the pawns, but matters are far from clear, Scherbakov-Daniliuk, Russian Ch (Elista) 1995) 17 d5 ♕b6 18 e5 a6 19 ♕e4 ♘a7 20 ♖aa1! ♘b5 21 ♕h4 ♖fc8 22 ♖fe1! ♘c3 23 ♗xc3 ♖xc3 24 ♖ab1 was played in the e-mail game Pankratov-Leko, 1999 (!). After 24...♕c7 (best) 25 ♘g5 ♕xe5!? 26 ♗xa6 ♕xd5 (26...♕d4!?) 27 ♗xb7 ♗c6 the position is about equal. Was Leko going to repeat this game?

3b) Black may instead have gone for the thematic continuation 15...f5!? 16 e5 ♗h6 17 d5 ♕xd5!? (17...♘xd5 18 ♗c4 ♖d8 19 ♖d1 ♕c6 20 ♕b3 e6 21 ♗d6 gave White strong pressure in Cebalo-Sale, Bled 1995) 18 ♗xe7 ♖e8, with unclear consequences.

13 ... ♘b6

14 ♖a1

This is a novelty, and an interesting one. 14 h3 ♗d7 15 ♖a1 ♕e6 16 ♗d3 ♖fd8 17 ♕e2 ♗e8 18 ♗e3 ♕d7 19 ♖a5 ♘a4 20 ♕d2 a6 enables Black to complete his development without the white centre becoming too irritating, Chernin-Leko, Hungarian Ch (Budapest) 1997.

14 ... ♕b2!

In his home analysis, Anand probably concentrated on the more natural retreat 14...♕e6 15 ♕b1 (after 15 ♗d3?! ♕d6, ...♗g4 is coming and d4 is vulnerable). Now we get the position from note '3' to White's 13th move, except that here White has the more useful move ♖e1 instead of ♗b4. The benefit can be seen after both 15...f5?! 16 ♘g5 ♕f6 17 e5, when the g5-knight is protected, and after 15...♗d7 16 d5 (16 ♖a5!? is equally strong), when there are no ...♘xd5 tricks. Leko also mentions 15...♘c4 16 ♗c3 ♘d6 17 ♗d3!?; here Black's knight gets in the way of the impending central advance. This shows that, provided Black's queen can actually survive in the enemy camp, the text-move is justified, as it puts more pressure on d4.

15 h3

With ...♗g4 already in the air this prophylaxis is necessary.

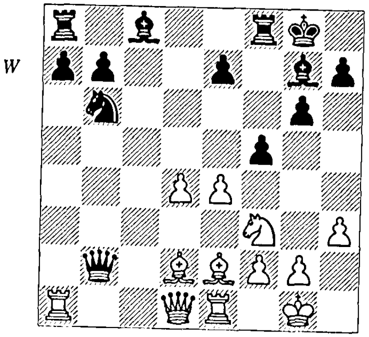
15 ... f5?! *(D)*

Although Leko is following his analysis, he is playing with fire. Surprisingly, the impudent black queen is not directly assailable after the more modest 15...♗d7!?; e.g., 16 ♗d3 ♖fc8! (16...♗xd4? loses a piece to 17 ♖b1 ♕a3 18 ♗b4) 17 ♖e2?! and now:

1) After 17...♘c4 18 ♖b1 ♕a3 19 ♗b4 ♕a4 20 ♖c2 White wins the pawn back advantageously.

2) 17...♗b5 18 ♗a5 (18 ♖b1 ♗a4! 19 ♕e1 ♕a3 gets White nowhere) 18...♕xa1 19 ♕xa1 ♗xd3 20 ♖e1! (20 ♖e3 ♗h6! is OK for Black) 20...e6 (20...♘c4 is weaker due to 21 ♗b4) 21 ♕a3 and White is better – a queen is a queen.

3) However, the changed circumstances allow 17...♗xd4! 18 ♖b1 ♗a4 19 ♖xb2 (19 ♕e1? ♕a3) 19...♗xd1 20 ♘xd4 ♗xe2 (20...♖d8 21 ♗e3 e5?! 22 ♖ed2 exd4 23 ♗g5 favours White) 21 ♘xe2 ♘c4, when White has to fight for a draw.



16 ♖b1

16 ♗d3! highlights the drawbacks of Black's last move. Apart from the obvious idea of opening the e-file, White also wants to trap the queen with ♖e2 as above:

1) After 16...♗d7 both plans are effective:

1a) 17 ♖e2 fxe4 (17...♗xd4 18 ♖b1 ♗a4 19 ♕e1 ♕a3 20 ♖xb6! ♗xb6 {or 20...♕xd3 21 ♖b4} 21 ♗c4+ ♔h8 22 ♗b4 costs Black material) 18 ♗a5 ♕xa1 19 ♕xa1 exd3 20 ♖xe7 with good attacking chances for White.

1b) Also the simple 17 exf5 ♗xf5 18 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 19 ♖xe7 is very unpleasant for Black, since the e7-rook is a guest that's not easy to get rid of. After 19...♖f7 (19...♘d5? 20 ♖b1 and White wins the b-pawn) 20 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 21 ♗a5 White is clearly better, as Black's king is too vulnerable.

2) Not much better is 16...fxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♕b5 (17...♗f5 18 ♗xf5 leads to line '1b') 18 ♖a5 ♕e8 (18...♕c4 19 ♖c5 ♕f7 20 ♖c7 gives White a tremendous initiative: all his pieces are menacingly active, while Black's development is still unfinished; a possible though unforced line is 20...♗f6 21 ♘g5! ♗xg5 22 ♗xg5 ♕xf2+ 23 ♔h2 e6 24 ♖xh7! with a decisive attack for White) 19 ♗b4 ♖f6 20 ♗c5 ♔h8 21 ♕b3 ♕d8 22 ♘g5! ♘c4 (22...♘d7 23 ♗b4, with the idea that 23...♕b6 is met by 24 ♘xh7! ♔xh7?! 25 ♖h5+ ♗h6 26 ♕e3, is a pretty line by Noomen) 23 ♖a6!! ♕g8 24 ♗xb7 ♖xa6 25 ♗xa8 h6 26 ♗b7 ♗xb7 27 ♕xb7 ♖f6 28 ♘f3 with a winning position for White, Noomen-Corti, corr. 1999.

16 ... ♕a2

17 ♕c1?!

After 17 ♗d3 fxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♕f7 White's rook is passive compared with note '2' to White's 16th move and the position is unclear. The text-move deserves condemnation for another reason – Anand still could have reached the aforementioned lines with 17 ♖a1, since 17...♕e6 18 ♘g5 is no help to Black.

17 ... ♔h8

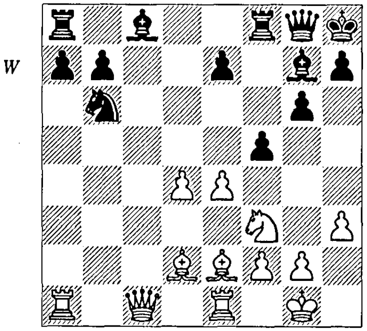
Black had other moves to meet the ♖xb6 threat:

1) 17...♕f7?! is weak due to 18 ♘g5 ♕f6 19 e5 ♕c6 20 ♕a3 with a strong initiative; e.g., 20...h6 21 ♖ec1 ♕a4 22 ♗c4+ ♔h8 23 ♘f7+ ♔h7 24 ♕xa4 ♘xa4 25 ♗b4.

2) Although 17...fxe4 18 ♖xb6 ♕f7 is possible, Black's position after 19 ♗c4 e6 20 ♖b3! exf3 21 ♖xf3 ♕e7 22 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 23 d5 is very precarious. For instance, 23...exd5? loses virtually by force: 24 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 25 ♗b4! ♕d8 26 ♗c3.

3) The provocative move 17...♗e6!?, with the idea ...♖fc8, is more interesting. White wins an exchange after 18 ♖a1 ♖fc8 19 ♗c3 ♕b3 20 ♖a3 ♖xc3 21 ♕xc3 ♕xc3 22 ♖xc3 fxe4 23 ♘e5, but the position is difficult to assess clearly.

18 ♖a1 ♕g8! *(D)*



This is practically forced; the exclamation mark is solely for the artistic impression. One doesn't often see such a long queen move with a board full of pieces.

19 ♗a5

White initiates complications, but al[illegible] so misses his last chance to get [illegible] Leko indicates that 19 ♗d3 ♗e6 20 [illegible] exf5 ♗xf5 21 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 22 ♖xe7 [illegible] changes or chases away the rook with approximate equality) was still better. After 20...fxe4 (20...♗c4 21 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 22 ♗g5 also sees White regaining the pawn advantageously) 21 ♗xe4 ♗d5 22 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 23 ♕xb7 ♖fb8 24 ♕d7 ♖d8 25 ♕g4 White retains some pull due to his better pawn-structure and safer king.

19 ... fxe4

This is the most logical reply, by which Black starts an attractive tactical sequence which resolves the tension. After 19...♗e6 20 ♗xb6 axb6 21 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 22 ♗d3 Black's pieces lack coordination and his pawns are no pretty sight; White has sufficient compensation.

20 ♗xb6 exf3

21 ♗xf3 ♗xh3

The seemingly plausible 21...♖xf3?! is inferior since after 22 gxf3 ♗xh3 23 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 24 ♗xa7, White intends ♗c5 and Black doesn't have enough for the exchange; e.g., 24...♕d5 25 ♖xe7 ♕xf3 26 ♖e8+ ♗f8 27 ♕g5 with a distinct advantage for White.

22 ♖xa7 *(D)*

22 ♗xa7 is less forcing, and also insufficient for any advantage: 22...♗e6 (22...♖xf3 23 gxf3 ♕d5 24 ♕e3 ♖f8 25 ♗c5 again isn't ideal for Black, while after 22...♕f7 23 ♕e3 White regains the pawn with a slight edge) 23 ♕c7 ♗d5 24 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 25 ♖xe7 ♖xa7! 26 ♖xa7 ♕xd4 27 ♖a3 ♕xf2+ 28 ♔h2 ♕d4 and White's king is too exposed to promise him any serious winning chances. However, White's most prudent course was 22 ♗xb7 ♖ab8 23 ♖xa7 ♖xb7 24 ♖xb7 ♕d5 25 gxh3 ♕xb7 26 ♗c5 with simplification and equality.

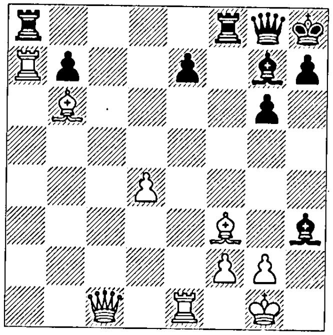
With the text-move White wants to keep the game going, but he is in for a shock.

22 ... ♗xg2!

An excellent shot, which forced even Anand to run into time-trouble, a very rare occurrence indeed! After 22...♖xa7 23 ♗xa7 it would take some time to reactivate Black's queen, whereas it now has enough scope even from g8.

23 ♔xg2

After 23 ♗xg2? ♖xa7 24 ♗xa7 ♕a2! White is in big trouble, as saving the bishop with 25



♗b6 ♕xf2+ 26 ♔h2 ♕h4+ 27 ♔g1 ♗h6 28 ♕c3 (28 ♕d1 ♕f2+ 29 ♔h1 ♖f4 or 28 ♕a1 ♗f4 gives Black a mating attack) 28...♕f2+ 29 ♔h1 ♗d2 30 d5+ ♗xc3 31 ♗xf2 leads to a lost endgame for White after 31...♖xf2 32 ♖xe7 b5 or even 31...♗xe1 32 ♗xe1 ♔g7.

23 ♖xa8 ♗xf3 24 ♖xf8 ♕xf8 25 ♕c7! is an equivalent alternative and also leads to a draw. White's queen joins the defence and he has a perpetual after 25...♗c6 26 ♖xe7 ♕f3 27 ♕b8+ ♗f8 28 ♕e5+ (but not 28 ♔f1?, which drops the rook to 28...♗b5+ 29 ♔g1 ♕d1+ 30 ♔h2 ♕h5+).

23 ...: ♕b3
24 ♕d1

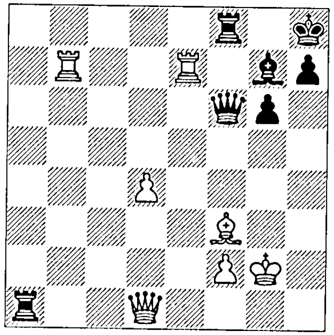
The best move. 24 ♖e3? is weak because of 24...♕xb6 25 ♖xb7 ♕xd4, when 26 ♖exe7 ♖xf3! 27 ♔xf3 ♖f8+ 28 ♔e2 (after 28 ♖f7 ♕d5+ White loses a rook) 28...♕xf2+ gives Black a winning attack. After 24 ♕e3 ♕xb6 25 ♖xb7 ♕f6 26 ♖xe7 ♖a4 27 ♖b1 White should still be able to draw, but the text-move allows him to double rooks on the seventh rank without delay.

24 ... ♕xb6
25 ♖xb7 ♕f6

25...♕xd4 26 ♖exe7 ♕xd1 27 ♗xd1 ♖g8 28 ♗b3 ♖ae8! 29 ♖ed7 ♖d8 30 ♖dc7 ♖c8 31 ♗xg8 ♖xc7 32 ♖xc7 ♔xg8 leads to a drawn endgame. Leko chooses a more testing continuation.

26 ♖exe7 ♖a1! *(D)*
27 ♖xg7

The only move, as both 27 ♕xa1? ♕xf3+ 28 ♔h2 ♕xf2+ 29 ♔h1 ♕h4+ and 27 ♕e2? ♕h4 28 ♖f7 ♕h1+ 29 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 30 ♔f4 ♕h4+ 31 ♗g4 ♗h6+ are losing for White.



27 ... ♖xd1

Not 27...♕g5+?, when 28 ♗g4! (28 ♔h2? ♕h6+) 28...♕d5+ 29 ♔g3 threatens mate and wins a piece after 29...♕xb7 30 ♖xb7.

28 ♖xh7+ ♔g8
29 ♗d5+ ♖f7
30 ♖bxf7

White shrewdly decides to force a perpetual. It makes little sense to prolong the game with 30 ♗xf7+ ♔xh7 31 ♗b3+ ♔h6 32 ♗xd1 ♕xd4 33 ♗f3, although here White also doesn't risk losing. Even the endgame after 33...g5 34 ♖b3 g4 35 ♗xg4!? ♕xg4+ 36 ♖g3 is a theoretical draw.

30 ... ♕g5+
31 ♔h3 ♕xd5

After 31...♖d3+ 32 f3 Black has to take the bishop anyway.

32 ♖hg7+ ½-½

Summary

In a topical variation Black chose a rarely played continuation (12...♘d7!?) and to justify this risky move after Anand's novel 14 ♖a1, he had to keep his queen in the firing line by 14...♕b2!. The crisis came directly afterwards; although Leko's 15...f5?! is a typical sharp resource in this line, with a rook already on e1 it involves extra risk. Since after the developing 15...♗d7!? White would still be unable to hurt Black's queen, this less committal move would have led to a typical situation for the modern 8 ♖b1 Grünfeld: White has compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but not more than that. White twice spurned his chance to play on the e-file (16 ♗d3!, 19 ♗d3!?), Black extricated his queen and in the following lively tactical skirmish (22...♗xg2!, 26...♖a1!) it was already Anand who had to be careful.

However, the most remarkable thing is that Leko prepared the whole line at home; he freely admitted that the amazing 22...♗xg2! was in fact warmly recommended by *Fritz* and that his analysis ended with the final (!) position of the game. The encounter demonstrates well the positive and negative sides of extensive computer-aided opening analysis. Without a previous electronic check even the best players in the world would hardly have ventured 14...♕b2! and 15...f5?! (this goes even more for the opening complications in Games 40 and 50); the tactical alertness of the software makes it possible to prepare or avoid even well-hidden pitfalls. A strong player can circumvent the software's limited horizon of calculation by 'prodding' it onwards in the desired direction, thus often revealing surprising resources. On the other hand, the strategic ability of the computers is still quite low and in this line general considerations are much more important than in the aforementioned Sicilian complex. Leko's notes indicate he was well aware of the risks he was running, so was it just a calculated gamble from his part?

Game 48

Jan Timman – Judit Polgar

Malmö 2000

Queen's Indian Defence [E15]

1 ♘f3 ♘f6
2 c4 b6
3 d4 e6
4 g3 ♗a6
5 ♕b3!?

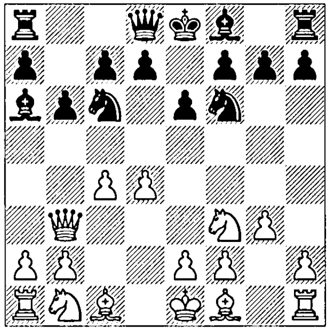
This is the sharpest of all the options (5 ♕a4, 5 ♘bd2 and 5 b3) at White's disposal.

5 ... ♘c6 *(D)*

This is the most usual and best reaction, by which Black creates the threat ...♘a5.

Instead, 5...c6 can be met by 6 ♗f4 d5 7 cxd5, forcing Black to acquiesce to a somewhat passive position with 7...♘xd5 (the symmetrical 7...cxd5? is unfortunately unplayable, as Black loses a piece after 8 ♗xb8! ♗c4 9 ♕a4+! b5 10 ♕c2 ♖xb8 11 b3) 8 ♗g5. After 5...c5 (or even 5...♗b7 6 ♗g2 c5 7 d5! exd5 8 ♘h4 with a position of a similar type) 6 d5 exd5 7 cxd5 d6 8 ♗g2 g6 9 0-0 ♗g7 10 ♘c3 0-0 11 ♗f4 ♖e8 12 ♖fe1 we get a Benoni-like position. Although the queen seems rather strangely placed on b3, it has the merit of preventing immediate counterplay with ...b5 (as in Game 28). This, together with White's potential central play, speaks in his favour. After 12...♘e4, as played in Fominykh-Epishin, Russian Ch (Elista) 1997, White can gain a considerable advantage by 13 ♘xe4! ♖xe4 14 ♕c2 ♖c4 15 ♕d2 ♕e7 16 e4!.

6 ♗d2?!



It's not easy to understand why this move is rather fashionable nowadays, but perhaps in a short time it will be relegated to a forgotten footnote. The older 6 ♘bd2 not only protects the c4-pawn, but also prepares e4. Black has two main answers:

1) 6...♘a5 7 ♕a4 ♗b7 8 ♗g2 c5 9 dxc5 bxc5 10 0-0 ♕c7!? (wiser than 10...♗e7 11 ♘e5 ♗xg2 12 ♔xg2 0-0 13 ♘df3 d6 14 ♗d2! dxe5 15 ♗xa5 ♕b8 16 ♗c3, when Black was still far from full equality in Sorin-Z.Almasi, Buenos Aires 1996) 11 ♖d1 ♘c6 and Black has little to worry about.

2) More ambitious and also playable is 6...d5!? 7 ♕a4 ♗b7 8 ♗g2 (8 ♘e5 ♗d6! 9

3b) Black may instead have gone for the thematic continuation 15...f5!? 16 e5 ♗h6 17 d5 ♕xd5!? (17...♘xd5 18 ♗c4 ♖d8 19 ♖d1 ♕c6 20 ♕b3 e6 21 ♗d6 gave White strong pressure in Cebalo-Sale, Bled 1995) 18 ♗xe7 ♖e8, with unclear consequences.

13 ... ♘b6

14 ♖a1

This is a novelty, and an interesting one. 14 h3 ♗d7 15 ♖a1 ♕e6 16 ♗d3 ♖fd8 17 ♕e2 ♗e8 18 ♗e3 ♕d7 19 ♖a5 ♘a4 20 ♕d2 a6 enables Black to complete his development without the white centre becoming too irritating, Chernin-Leko, Hungarian Ch (Budapest) 1997.

14 ... ♕b2!

In his home analysis, Anand probably concentrated on the more natural retreat 14...♕e6 15 ♕b1 (after 15 ♗d3?! ♕d6, ...♗g4 is coming and d4 is vulnerable). Now we get the position from note '3' to White's 13th move, except that here White has the more useful move ♖e1 instead of ♗b4. The benefit can be seen after both 15...f5?! 16 ♘g5 ♕f6 17 e5, when the g5-knight is protected, and after 15...♗d7 16 d5 (16 ♖a5!? is equally strong), when there are no ...♘xd5 tricks. Leko also mentions 15...♘c4 16 ♗c3 ♘d6 17 ♗d3!?; here Black's knight gets in the way of the impending central advance. This shows that, provided Black's queen can actually survive in the enemy camp, the text-move is justified, as it puts more pressure on d4.

15 h3

With ...♗g4 already in the air this prophylaxis is necessary.

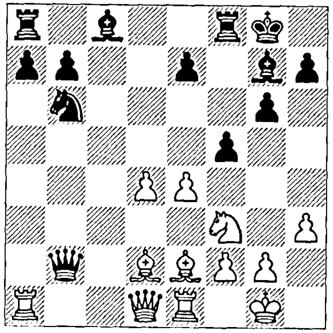
15 ... f5?! *(D)*

Although Leko is following his analysis, he is playing with fire. Surprisingly, the impudent black queen is not directly assailable after the more modest 15...♗d7!?; e.g., 16 ♗d3 ♖fc8! (16...♗xd4? loses a piece to 17 ♖b1 ♕a3 18 ♗b4) 17 ♖e2?! and now:

1) After 17...♘c4 18 ♖b1 ♕a3 19 ♗b4 ♕a4 20 ♖c2 White wins the pawn back advantageously.

2) 17...♗b5 18 ♗a5 (18 ♖b1 ♗a4! 19 ♕e1 ♕a3 gets White nowhere) 18...♕xa1 19 ♕xa1 ♗xd3 20 ♖e1! (20 ♖e3 ♗h6! is OK for Black) 20...e6 (20...♘c4 is weaker due to 21 ♗b4) 21 ♕a3 and White is better – a queen is a queen.

3) However, the changed circumstances allow 17...♗xd4! 18 ♖b1 ♗a4 19 ♖xb2 (19 ♕e1? ♕a3) 19...♗xd1 20 ♘xd4 ♗xe2 (20...♖d8 21 ♗e3 e5?! 22 ♖ed2 exd4 23 ♗g5 favours White) 21 ♘xe2 ♘c4, when White has to fight for a draw.



16 ♖b1

16 ♗d3! highlights the drawbacks of Black's last move. Apart from the obvious idea of opening the e-file, White also wants to trap the queen with ♖e2 as above:

1) After 16...♗d7 both plans are effective:

1a) 17 ♖e2 fxe4 (17...♗xd4 18 ♖b1 ♗a4 19 ♕e1 ♕a3 20 ♖xb6! ♗xb6 {or 20...♕xd3 21 ♖b4} 21 ♗c4+ ♔h8 22 ♗b4 costs Black material) 18 ♗a5 ♕xa1 19 ♕xa1 exd3 20 ♖xe7 with good attacking chances for White.

1b) Also the simple 17 exf5 ♗xf5 18 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 19 ♖xe7 is very unpleasant for Black, since the e7-rook is a guest that's not easy to get rid of. After 19...♖f7 (19...♘d5? 20 ♖b1 and White wins the b-pawn) 20 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 21 ♗a5 White is clearly better, as Black's king is too vulnerable.

2) Not much better is 16...fxe4 17 ♗xe4 ♕b5 (17...♗f5 18 ♗xf5 leads to line '1b') 18 ♖a5 ♕e8 (18...♕c4 19 ♖c5 ♕f7 20 ♖c7 gives White a tremendous initiative: all his pieces are menacingly active, while Black's development is still unfinished; a possible though unforced line is 20...♗f6 21 ♘g5! ♗xg5 22 ♗xg5 ♕xf2+ 23 ♔h2 e6 24 ♖xh7! with a decisive attack for White) 19 ♗b4 ♖f6 20 ♗c5 ♔h8 21 ♕b3 ♕d8 22 ♘g5! ♘c4 (22...♘d7 23 ♗b4, with the idea that 23...♕b6 is met by 24 ♘xh7! ♔xh7?! 25 ♖h5+ ♗h6 26 ♕e3, is a pretty line by Noomen) 23 ♖a6!! ♕g8 24 ♗xb7 ♖xa6 25 ♗xa8 h6 26 ♗b7 ♗xb7 27 ♕xb7 ♖f6 28 ♘f3 with a winning position for White, Noomen-Corti, corr. 1999.

16 ... ♕a2

17 ♕c1?!

After 17 ♗d3 fxe4 18 ♗xe4 ♕f7 White's rook is passive compared with note '2' to White's 16th move and the position is unclear. The text-move deserves condemnation for another reason – Anand still could have reached the aforementioned lines with 17 ♖a1, since 17...♕e6 18 ♘g5 is no help to Black.

17 ... ♔h8

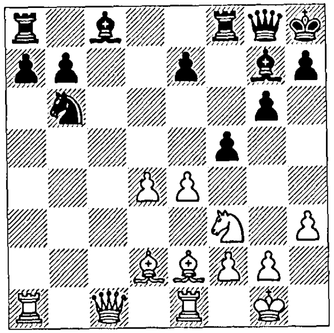
Black had other moves to meet the ♖xb6 threat:

1) 17...♕f7?! is weak due to 18 ♘g5 ♕f6 19 e5 ♕c6 20 ♕a3 with a strong initiative; e.g., 20...h6 21 ♖ec1 ♕a4 22 ♗c4+ ♔h8 23 ♘f7+ ♔h7 24 ♕xa4 ♘xa4 25 ♗b4.

2) Although 17...fxe4 18 ♖xb6 ♕f7 is possible, Black's position after 19 ♗c4 e6 20 ♖b3! exf3 21 ♖xf3 ♕e7 22 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 23 d5 is very precarious. For instance, 23...exd5? loses virtually by force: 24 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 25 ♗b4! ♕d8 26 ♗c3.

3) The provocative move 17...♗e6!?, with the idea ...♖fc8, is more interesting. White wins an exchange after 18 ♖a1 ♖fc8 19 ♗c3 ♕b3 20 ♖a3 ♖xc3 21 ♕xc3 ♕xc3 22 ♖xc3 fxe4 23 ♘e5, but the position is difficult to assess clearly.

18 ♖a1 ♕g8! *(D)*



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19 ♗a5

White initiates complications, but in doing so misses his last chance to get some edge. Leko indicates that 19 ♗d3 ♗e6 20 ♕c7! (20 exf5 ♗xf5 21 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 22 ♖xe7 ♖f7 exchanges or chases away the rook with approximate equality) was still better. After 20...fxe4 (20...♗c4 21 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 22 ♗g5 also sees White regaining the pawn advantageously) 21 ♗xe4 ♗d5 22 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 23 ♕xb7 ♖fb8 24 ♕d7 ♖d8 25 ♕g4 White retains some pull due to his better pawn-structure and safer king.

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20 ♗xb6 exf3

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The seemingly plausible 21...♖xf3?! is inferior since after 22 gxf3 ♗xh3 23 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 24 ♗xa7, White intends ♗c5 and Black doesn't have enough for the exchange; e.g., 24...♕d5 25 ♖xe7 ♕xf3 26 ♖e8+ ♗f8 27 ♕g5 with a distinct advantage for White.

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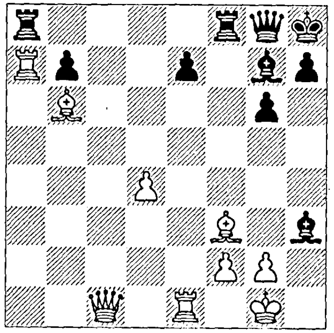

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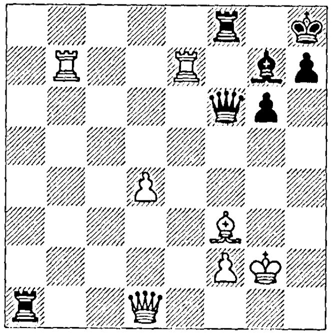
The only move, as both 27 ♕xa1? ♕xf3+ 28 ♔h2 ♕xf2+ 29 ♔h1 ♕h4+ and 27 ♕e2? ♕h4 28 ♖f7 ♕h1+ 29 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 30 ♔f4 ♕h4+ 31 ♗g4 ♗h6+ are losing for White.



27 ... ♖xd1

Not 27...♕g5+?, when 28 ♗g4! (28 ♔h2? ♕h6+) 28...♕d5+ 29 ♔g3 threatens mate and wins a piece after 29...♕xb7 30 ♖xb7.

28 ♖xh7+ ♔g8
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White shrewdly decides to force a perpetual. It makes little sense to prolong the game with 30 ♗xf7+ ♔xh7 31 ♗b3+ ♔h6 32 ♗xd1 ♕xd4 33 ♗f3, although here White also doesn't risk losing. Even the endgame after 33...g5 34 ♖b3 g4 35 ♗xg4!? ♕xg4+ 36 ♖g3 is a theoretical draw.

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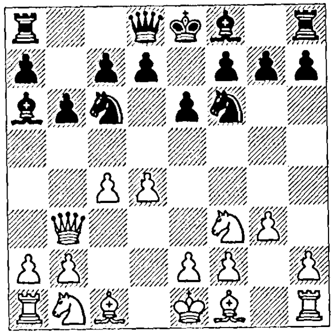
6 ♗d2?!



It's not easy to understand why this move is rather fashionable nowadays, but perhaps in a short time it will be relegated to a forgotten footnote. The older 6 ♘bd2 not only protects the c4-pawn, but also prepares e4. Black has two main answers:

1) 6...♘a5 7 ♕a4 ♗b7 8 ♗g2 c5 9 dxc5 bxc5 10 0-0 ♕c7!? (wiser than 10...♗e7 11 ♘e5 ♗xg2 12 ♔xg2 0-0 13 ♘df3 d6 14 ♗d2! dxe5 15 ♗xa5 ♕b8 16 ♗c3, when Black was still far from full equality in Sorin-Z.Almasi, Buenos Aires 1996) 11 ♖d1 ♘c6 and Black has little to worry about.

2) More ambitious and also playable is 6...d5!? 7 ♕a4 ♗b7 8 ♗g2 (8 ♘e5 ♗d6! 9

♘xc6 ♕d7 gets White nowhere) 8...♗d6 9 0-0 0-0 10 a3 a5 11 e3 ♘e7 with a complicated position.

It shouldn't be a surprise that Black has more than one road to equality – intuition suggests 5 ♕b3!? can hardly endanger the 4...♗a6 line.

6 ... ♗b7

The bishop returns to its natural diagonal and creates the threat of ...♘xd4. A possible alternative is 6...♖b8 7 ♗g2 b5 8 c5!? b4, when 9 a3 leads to a repetition after 9...bxa3 10 ♕xa3 ♗c4 11 ♘c3 ♖b3 12 ♕a4 ♖b4 13 ♕c2 ♗b3 14 ♕d3 ♗c4. However, Black can already strive for more without risking much.

7 ♗c3

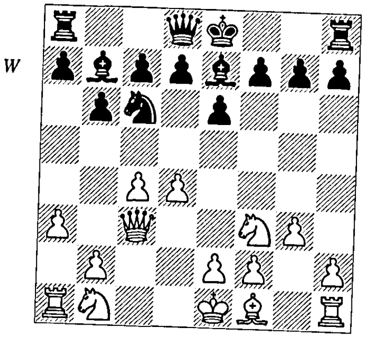
7 d5!? ♘e7! (White's intention is 7...exd5 8 cxd5 ♘e7 9 d6 cxd6 10 ♗g2 with good compensation) 8 dxe6 fxe6 9 ♗g2 ♘f5 10 0-0 ♗c5 11 ♘c3?! (even the stronger 11 ♗c3 leads to equality at best) 11...0-0 12 ♕c2 ♕e8 13 ♗g5 ♘g4 gives Black a clear advantage as his forces are already generating serious threats against White's kingside, Fominykh-Sakaev, Russian Ch (Moscow) 1999.

7 ... ♘e4
8 a3

8 ♗g2? ♘xc3 costs White material after 9 ♘xc3 ♘xd4 or 9 bxc3 ♘a5, so he must invest another tempo.

8 ... ♘xc3
9 ♕xc3 ♗e7 *(D)*

This is a logical move. After the more direct 9...♕f6?! 10 d5! ♘e7 11 e4 ♕xc3+ 12 ♘xc3 the former disharmony in White's camp is gone and he enjoys a formidable space advantage.



10 ♕d3?

White wants to occupy the centre and thus limit the scope of the b7-bishop. However, as this ambitious and time-consuming move fails to achieve its main goal, alternatives have to be considered:

1) The immediate 10 e4?! f5! (10...♗f6 is less energetic; although White's position crumbles after 11 e5? ♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 ♗xe5, 11 ♕d3 transposes to the note to Black's 10th move) breaks up White's pawn phalanx; e.g., 11 d5 (11 exf5? ♘xd4 or 11 ♗d3 ♗f6 is even worse for White) 11...♗f6 12 ♕e3 ♘e5!? 13 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 14 f4 (14 exf5 ♕f6!) 14...♗xb2 15 ♖a2 ♗f6 16 exf5 0-0 and White will have problems getting out of the opening alive.

2) 10 d5 ♗f6 forces 11 ♕c2 (11 ♕d2? ♘a5) and gives Black too much dark-square play.

3) Even the logical and modest 10 ♗g2 ♗f6 11 0-0 (11 e3 ♘e7! 12 ♕d3 c5 13 ♘c3 cxd4 14 exd4 ♖c8 15 ♘b5 d5 16 cxd5 a6 17 ♘c3?! ♘xd5 18 ♘e4 ♗e7 19 0-0 ♕c7 20 ♘e5 f6 21 ♘f3 ♕c2 and Black is clearly better, Ehlvest-Ivanchuk, Elista 1998) 11...♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 ♗xg2 13 ♔xg2 c5 14 ♘xe6 dxe6!? doesn't solve all White's problems; he still has to be careful.

10 ... d5

Black opens the position for his bishops. Less impressive is 10...♗f6 11 e4 e5 12 d5 ♘d4 13 ♘xd4 exd4 14 f4! (14 ♘d2 c5 15 h4 0-0 16 ♗h3 d6 17 ♔f1?! b5! 18 cxb5 a6 19 ♔g2 axb5 20 ♕xb5 ♗a6 gave Black a powerful initiative for the pawn in Epishin-Rodriguez Lopez, Linares open 1998) 14...♕e7 15 ♗e2 (15 ♗h3!?) 15...d6 16 ♘d2 c5 17 ♗g4. Here the bishop-pair is kept at bay and White's centre remains solid, promising him some advantage.

11 cxd5 ♕xd5
12 e4

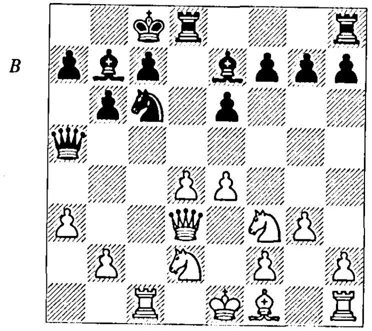
White is not sufficiently developed to maintain a broad pawn-centre and his uncastled king will soon be in serious danger. By now, however, Timman had realized that the natural and previously played 12 ♘c3? (12 ♗g2 ♘xd4! 13 ♘h4 ♕c5) runs into the tactical refutation 12...♘e5!. Then maintaining material equality (13 ♘xd5 or 13 dxe5) gives Black a huge positional plus and White's initiative after 13 ♘xe5 ♕xh1 14 0-0-0 ♕xh2!? won't last long.

12 ... ♕a5+
13 ♘bd2

13 ♘c3 is no better, as it closes the c-file for White. After 13...0-0-0 (13...♗f6 14 e5!? cuts off Black's queen; here the typical tactical blow 14...♘xd4? doesn't work owing to 15 ♕xd4! ♗xf3 16 ♗b5+ c6 17 b4) 14 ♕c4 (after 14 ♕e3 f5 White doesn't have even the counterplay he achieved in the game) 14...f5!? (14...♗f6 again isn't ideal in view of 15 0-0-0 ♖d7 16 d5! with ♗h3 in the air) 15 ♗d3 ♘b4 White's centre is bursting at the seams.

13 ... 0-0-0
14 ♖c1 *(D)*

After 14 0-0-0 ♘xd4! 15 ♘xd4 ♕c5+ 16 ♘c4 ♗f6 Black regains the piece with a big advantage.



14 ... f5

Now 14...♘xd4? is insufficient owing to 15 ♘xd4 ♕e5 (15...♗f6 16 ♕c2 demonstrates that White's last move was not just meant as preparation for b4) 16 ♘2f3 ♕xe4+ 17 ♕xe4 ♗xe4 18 ♗a6+.

Polgar's tempting and thematic move leads to interesting complications, but the straightforward 14...♗f6! is very strong: 15 b4 (the tactics work for Black: after 15 ♕c2 ♗xd4 16 b4 ♕xa3 17 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 18 b5 ♖xd2! 19 ♔xd2 ♖d8+ 20 ♗d3 ♕d6 21 bxc6 ♗a6 White is lost) 15...♕a4 (15...♕h5?! 16 ♕c3 diverts Black's queen from the scene of action) 16 ♕c3 (after 16 ♕c4 ♖d7 17 e5 ♗e7 Black threatens not only ...♕xa3, but also the traditional ...♘xd4; following 16 ♖c4 ♘xd4! White's position falls apart: 17 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♕d7 or 17 ♘xd4 b5) 16...♗xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♖xd4 18 b5 ♖xe4+ 19 ♘xe4 ♕xe4+ 20 ♔d2 ♕d4+! (20...♕xh1 21 bxc6 ♕d5+ 22 ♔e3 is not clear) 21 ♗d3 (21 ♔c2 ♘b4+) 21...♕xf2+ 22 ♔d1 ♖d8 and, with three pawns for the exchange, Black is close to winning.

15 b4

Half-hearted moves are no good; e.g., 15 ♗g2? loses immediately to 15...fxe4 16 ♕xe4 ♘xd4. White must act.

15 ... fxe4
16 ♕c3!

This is best. After 16 ♘xe4 ♕f5 White has no plausible move and 16 ♕xe4 ♕xa3 17 ♖xc6 ♗xb4 isn't a big help either, as Black's main threat ...♖d6 is hard to meet.

16 ... ♕d5

Black mustn't underestimate White's play on the c-file:

1) 16...♕f5 is weaker in view of 17 ♘e5 ♖hf8 (after 17...♗c5 the simplest is 18 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 19 bxc5 e3 20 fxe3 ♗xh1 21 cxb6, when it's White who is attacking: 21...c6 22 e4! ♗xe4 23 ♗d3!) 18 f4! (18 ♘xc6? ♕xf2+ 19 ♔d1 e3! 20 ♘xd8?! ♗xd8 and Black regains the sacrificed material with interest) 18...e3 19 ♘df3 and there is no suitable follow-up for Black.

2) Although the immediate piece sacrifice 16...♗xb4 17 axb4 ♕xb4 18 ♘xe4 ♕xc3+ (the alternative 18...e5 19 ♕xb4 ♘xb4 20 d5! ♗xd5 21 ♘fd2 leads to a similar position) 19 ♖xc3 ♘xd4 20 ♘fd2 is quite promising for Black, it's definitely more appealing to keep the queens on.

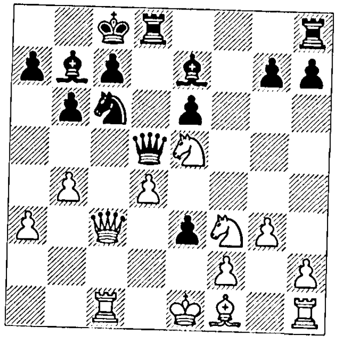
17 ♘e5

This is necessary, since after 17 b5 exf3 18 bxc6 ♗a8 and ...♖d6 the a8-bishop is only cornered temporarily. The counterattack 17 ♗c4 ♕f5 18 ♗a6 ♗xa6 19 ♕xc6 is best dealt with by 19...♔b8! 20 ♕xc7+ ♔a8 21 ♕xe7 ♖c8!, when it's White's king that's under fire.

17 ... e3
18 ♘df3 *(D)*
18 ... exf2+

After this natural move White's king escapes into relative safety, so it's worth studying the alternatives:

1) After 18...♗c5 19 ♗c4 (if 19 bxc5 ♘xe5 20 ♘xe5, Black interpolates 20...exf2+! and wins after 21 ♔e2 ♕xh1 22 cxb6 ♕e4+) 19...exf2+ 20 ♔f1 ♕e4 21 ♗d3 the queen's return to d5 means a draw, while the piece sacrifice 21...♕e3!? 22 bxc5 ♘xe5 23 ♘xe5 ♖xd4 (23...♗xh1? 24 ♗a6+) 24 c6 ♕xe5 25 cxb7+



♔b8 26 ♗e2, while not risking much, also doesn't give Black any great hope of an advantage.

2) 18...♖hf8! 19 ♗e2 (19 fxe3? ♖xf3 20 ♗g2 ♖xe3+ and 19 ♗g2? exf2+ 20 ♔f1 ♗a6+ 21 ♔xf2 ♕xd4+ are ways for White to lose at once) 19...exf2+ 20 ♔f1 (after 20 ♔d1 the simplest is 20...♗c5 21 bxc5 ♘xd4!) and now:

2a) 20...♗g5 21 b5! (21 ♖c2?! ♗d2! 22 ♘xc6 ♗xc3 23 ♘e7+ ♔b8 24 ♘xd5 ♖xf3! 25 ♗xf3 ♗xd4 26 ♖xc7 ♗xd5 gives Black realistic winning chances due to his powerful f2-pawn) 21...♗d2 22 ♕c2! ♗xc1 23 bxc6 with a double-edged position. If White manages to consolidate his forces and activate his rook quickly enough, the attacking chances will be on his side.

2b) Much better is Polgar's suggestion 20...♗c5!, returning to the ideas of line '1' with an important extra tempo. The pressure on the long diagonal after 21 dxc5 (21 bxc5 ♘xe5 22 cxb6 ♖d7 23 dxe5 ♖xf3) 21...♘xe5 22 cxb6 ♕c6 is unbearable.

19 ♔xf2 ♖hf8
20 ♔g2

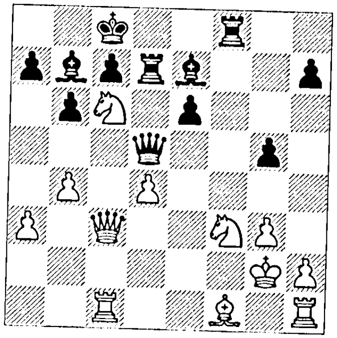
20 ♘xc6? ♗xc6 21 ♗g2 ♕d6 is hopeless for White, as taking the bishop leads to mate: 22 ♕xc6 ♕xd4+ 23 ♔e2 ♕d3+ 24 ♔f2 ♗c5+! 25 ♖xc5 ♕d2+ 26 ♔f1 ♕d1+ 27 ♔f2 ♖d2+. 20 ♔g1? is also weak due to 20...♗c5!, so to protect the knight White's king must enter the dangerous diagonal.

20 ... g5?

A misguided move, after which the advantage changes hands for a while. Black has a strong attack after 20...♗c5 21 ♗c4 ♕e4! (21...♘xe5? is weak due to 22 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 23 dxe5 ♖xf3 24 ♕xf3) 22 ♖he1 (22 ♗d3 ♕xd4! 23 ♘xd4 ♘xe5+ 24 ♔h3 ♖f6! and Black's assault triumphs) 22...♘xe5 23 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 24 dxc5 ♘xf3, but the simplest was 20...♖xf3 21 ♘xf3 b5!. After this strong multi-purpose move (stopping b5, ♗c4 and even ♗a6) White's attack on the c-file is over. On the other hand, after protecting c7 Black will be ready to unleash the battery on the a8-h1 diagonal with serious consequences for the white king. After 22 ♗d3 (or 22 ♔g1 ♗f6 23 ♗g2 ♕d6 24 ♕c5 ♘xd4 25 ♕xd6 ♖xd6, and in the endgame Black will win the a3-pawn) 22...♗g5! 23 ♖c2 (after 23 ♖ce1 ♘xd4 24 ♗e4 ♕xe4 25 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 Black will end up with three active minor pieces for the queen, and his attack is not yet over) 23...♖d7 White is in big trouble.

21 ♘xc6 ♖d7 *(D)*

Forced, as 21...♗c5? is out of the question due to 22 ♘e7+.



22 g4?

This parries the main threat, but weakens the kingside. Now, despite his material advantage, White will find it difficult to prove that he is better, while he must already be careful himself. A safe way to return the piece is 22 ♗e2 g4 23 ♖hf1, but even smarter is 22 ♘xa7+! ♔b8 23 ♘c6+, grabbing an extra pawn and postponing the decision as to how to proceed.

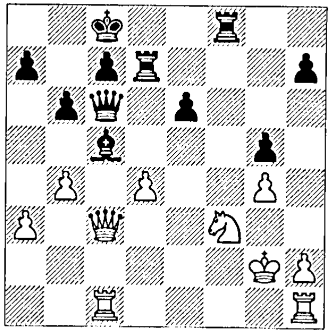
22 ... ♗c5!

An attractive move, which also happens to be very strong. White won't get to take on a7 any more and must fight to keep the b7-bishop out of the fray.

23 ♗b5

White rightly does something to help his development and finally frees his h1-rook. 23 b5?! ♗xd4! 24 ♕d3 (24 ♘cxd4? loses directly to 24...♕xd4) 24...e5 threatens not only ...e4, but also ...♖df7 and gives Black a ferocious attack. 23 bxc5 ♕xc6 24 ♗e2 (24 d5 ♖xd5 25 ♗e2 ♖d2! 26 ♕xd2 ♖xf3 27 ♗xf3 ♕xf3+ 28 ♔g1 ♕xh1+ 29 ♔f2 ♕xh2+ leads to a technically winning position for Black) 24...♖xd4 (24...h5!?) 25 cxb6 (25 ♕xd4? loses outright to 25...♖xf3) 25...♕xb6 is also extremely dangerous for White.

23 ... ♗xc6
24 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 *(D)*



25 ♖hf1?!

A solid move: White's king finally prepares to leave the long diagonal and free his knight from the annoying pin. However, in the resulting endgame Black is better, so the riskier alternatives deserve closer attention:

1) 25 dxc5? is weak in view of 25...h5!. Apart from the obvious ...hxg4 threat, Black has other poisonous ideas such as ...♖d2+! or ...♕xf3+!.

2) 25 bxc5!? is playable:

2a) 25...♕e4 26 ♖hf1! ♕xg4+ 27 ♔h1 enables White to consolidate his position.

2b) The ambitious 25...h5!? 26 cxb6 ♕e4 27 ♖he1! (27 b7+? is bad since after 27...♔b8 28 ♖he1 ♕xg4+ 29 ♔f2 ♕h3! White loses the knight) 27...♕xg4+ 28 ♔f2 axb6 29 ♖e3 gives White sufficient defensive chances because his pressure against c7 ties down Black's rook.

2c) 25...♖xd4 26 h3 (26 ♕xd4? ♕xf3+ 27 ♔g1 bxc5 leads to mate and 26 cxb6? ♖xg4+ 27 ♔f2 ♕xb6+ 28 ♕c5 ♖gf4 to a lost rook endgame for White; 26 ♔g3 ♕e4! 27 ♘xd4 ♕f4+ 28 ♔h3 h5 29 ♖hg1 hxg4+ 30 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 31 ♔g3 ♖h8! gives Black a dangerous attack with a guaranteed draw) is also playable for White. A possible continuation is 26...♕d5 (26...h5 is weaker due to 27 ♖hf1!) 27 cxb6 ♖c4 28 ♕e3 ♖xf3! 29 ♕xf3 ♕d2+ 30 ♕f2 ♕d5+ with a perpetual check.

25 ... h5
26 ♔g1

26 h3? loses to 26...hxg4 27 hxg4 ♕e4 28 bxc5 (28 dxc5 ♕xg4+ 29 ♔f2 ♖d2+! 30 ♔e1 ♕e4+! is similar) 28...♕xg4+ 29 ♔f2 ♖df7 30 ♔e2 ♖xf3!, when Black is going to have a queen and too many pawns against two rooks.

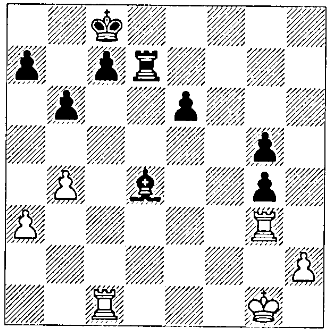
26 ... ♖xf3

26...♗xd4+ 27 ♕xd4! ♖xd4 28 ♖xc6 ♖xg4+ 29 ♔f2 gets Black nowhere.

27 ♕xf3 ♕xf3

The move-order is important, as 27...♗xd4+? 28 ♔g2 ♕xf3+ 29 ♔xf3 allows White to activate his king.

28 ♖xf3 hxg4
29 ♖g3 ♗xd4+ *(D)*



30 ♔h1

Hiding the king in the corner in an endgame usually isn't a very bright idea. However, even after 30 ♔g2 ♗e5 31 ♖xg4 ♗f4 32 ♖c2 (32 ♖f1 e5 is similar) 32...e5 33 b5 ♔b7 (or 33...♖h7) White's task is far from easy. The g4-rook is out of play and his pawns are weak, while on the other hand Black's forces are well coordinated. Had White taken on a7 on move 22 in this situation it would be Black fighting for a draw.

30 ... ♗e5
31 ♖xg4 ♗f4
32 ♖c2?!

32 ♖c3, with the idea 32...e5 33 ♖g2, is better. After the subsequent ♖e2 or ♖gc2 White gets a chance to activate his king.

32 ... e5

32...♖d3 33 ♔g2 e5 (33...♖xa3?! 34 h4) is also playable.

33 ♖c3

33 ♔g2!?.

33 ... e4
34 ♖c4

34 ♖g2!? would have enabled White to put up stiffer resistance.

34 ... e3
35 ♖e4 c5?

Black should have played 35...♖d1+ 36 ♖g1 ♖d2 37 ♖g2 c5! 38 bxc5 bxc5 39 ♖c4 (39 h4 ♖d4 and Black wins as in the game) 39...♔d7 and as the c5-pawn is taboo, the king marches on.

Now White gets one last chance to rectify his unconvincing play since move 22, caused by time-trouble.

36 bxc5 bxc5
37 h4?

After 37 ♖c4 ♖e7! 38 ♖xc5+ ♔b7 39 ♖c1 (39 ♖g1 e2 40 ♖b1+ ♔a6) 39...e2 40 ♖e1 ♗d2 the rook endgame is lost, while it's also too late for 37 ♖g2 ♖d1+ 38 ♖g1 ♖d4! 39 ♖e7 ♔d8 with the same motifs as in the game.

White should play 37 ♖e8+! ♔c7 38 h4, when there is no direct win in sight: 38...♖d1+ (38...♖d4? 39 hxg5 ♔d7 40 g6! ♗h6 41 ♖ee4 turns the tables on Black, while 38...♖h7 39 ♖e4 ♔d6 40 ♔g2 should save White) 39 ♔g2 ♖d2+ 40 ♔f1 (40 ♔g1!? ♖d4 41 ♔f1 is also possible) 40...♖f2+ 41 ♔e1 gxh4 42 ♖xh4 ♗g3 43 ♖he4 with a likely draw.

37 ... ♖d4! *(D)*

And the game is over! White can't maintain his rook on the e-file, and this enables Black to queen his e-pawn.

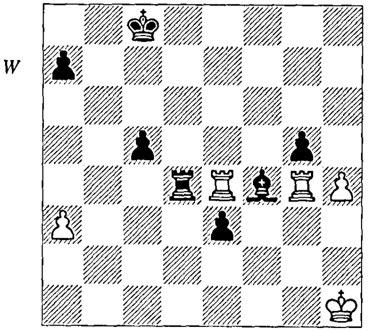
38 ♖xd4

38 ♖e7 doesn't help: 38...♔d8 39 ♖e6 ♔d7 and ...e2.

38 ... cxd4
39 ♔g2 d3
40 ♔f3

After 40 ♔f1 e2+ 41 ♔e1 ♗e5 White can't cover c3 and g3 simultaneously.

40 ... e2
0-1



After reaching the time-control, White acknowledges that he can't fight Black's pawns any more: 41 ♖g1 gxh4 42 ♔xf4 d2.

Summary

Black wrested the initiative in the early phase of the game, forcing White to neglect his development and parry threats directed against the d4-pawn. Although this enabled Polgar to solve her opening problems comfortably, the position still remained balanced – after all White can generally afford to avoid the strongest lines without risking a serious disadvantage. The crisis came only after the provocative 10 ♕d3?, and it came surprisingly quickly. A pawn-centre unsupported by pieces is more of a liability than an asset; moreover, White's king was very vulnerable. This showed clearly not only in the course of the game, but also after 14...♗f6!, an alternative which would have put d4 under unbearable pressure. Another notable fact is that White never got time to finish the fianchetto started with 4 g3.

Black's choice 14...f5 also blew White's pawn-centre to pieces, but for the time being d4 remained intact and this enabled White to secure counterplay. Although Timman managed to complicate matters, his king became even more exposed in the process and had Polgar radically eliminated the threats on the c-file with 20...♗c5 or 20...♖xf3, the weakness of the kingside and the a8-h1 diagonal would have become decisive factors. In this respect 20...g5? was a mistake not only because it sacrificed a piece – as the annotations show, White could have retained his queenside play to keep Black busy with counter-threats. Despite the extra material the position remained tactically demanding for White and his mistakes 22 g4? and 25 ♖hf1?! landed him in trouble. Especially the latter inaccuracy is instructive: Timman tried to release the tension and spurned the consistent 25 bxc5!? only to find himself desperately short of time in a difficult endgame. After 31...♗f4 it's not easy to place the blame on a single error, but White sealed his fate by failing to coordinate his forces (his king and g4-rook remained misplaced until the bitter end) and driving forward Black's e-pawn.

Game 49

Christopher Lutz – Ilia Smirin

European Championship, Saint Vincent 2000

Sicilian Defence, 4...♕b6 [B33]

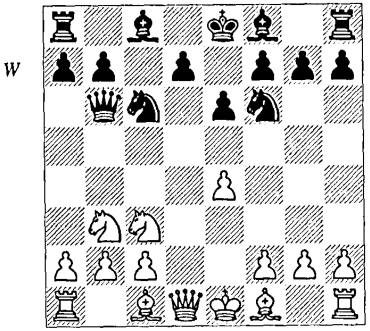
1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3 ♘c6
3 d4 cxd4
4 ♘xd4 ♕b6?!

This provocative sortie has become popular in various lines of the Sicilian. Let's just mention two other examples: a modern approach in the Kan, 2...e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♘c3 b5 6 ♗d3 ♕b6!?, and 2...♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗c4 ♕b6 in the Sozin variation. As the first example shows, contrary to the Najdorf version of ...♕b6, Black's idea is not to take on b2, but to force the d4-knight away from the centre before developing the queen to its natural Sicilian square, c7. White thus wins a tempo, but usually only to make the not very useful move ♘b3. Another possible attraction for ...♕b6 fans is that these lines are not so well researched as the main variations and leave more scope for creativity.

5 ♘b3

We have already indicated that this is not the ideal square for the knight. However, this retreat keeps more tension in the position than 5 ♘b5 ♘f6 6 ♗e3 ♕d8 7 ♘1c3 a6 8 ♘d4 e5! 9 ♘f5 d5 10 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 11 exd5 ♘b4! 12 g4 g6 13 a3 ♘xd5 14 ♗g2 ♗e6, when in Emelin-Avrukh, Beersheba 1998, Black didn't have even the slightest problems.

5 ... ♘f6
6 ♘c3 e6 *(D)*



7 ♗d3

White opts for simple development. The bishop on d3 presents a serious threat to Black's castled king. In the Sozin line mentioned above, similar positions arise and White's bishop also very often ends up on d3, but only after moving twice. This explains the evaluation of 4...♕b6?!. Black doesn't have to worry about more artificial tries such as 7 ♕e2 ♗b4! (7...d6 8 g4 a6 9 g5 ♘d7 10 h4 leads to a sharp position with some advantage for White) 8 ♗d2 0-0 9 a3 ♗e7 10 e5 ♘e8 11 0-0-0 ♕c7 12 f4 a6 13 ♘e4 d6 14 exd6 ♘xd6 15 g3 b5 16 ♗g2 ♘xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗b7 with equality, V.Spasov-Kurajica, Moscow OL 1994.

7 ... ♗e7
8 0-0 0-0
9 ♗e3 ♕c7
10 f4 d6
11 ♕f3

Again a natural attacking move. White can increase his space advantage by 11 ♘b5 ♕b8 12 c4, but nowadays 'Hedgehog' structures don't scare people any more and even here after 12...b6 Black has little to complain about. If White prefers a pawn-storm to the piece attack, then more flexible is the immediate 11 g4!?

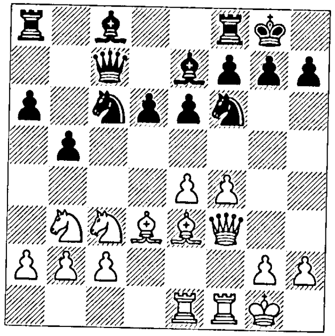
♖e8 12 g5 ♘d7, as now 13 ♕h5 is possible in one move. However, the position still remains complicated and breaking Black's defences in a Scheveningen set-up is no mean task.

11 ... a6

12 ♖ae1

12 a4 b6 13 ♖ae1 ♗b7 and ...♘b4 gives Black counterplay; lines such as 14 ♕h3 ♘b4 15 e5?! ♘xd3! (15...dxe5 16 fxe5 ♕xe5 17 ♗xb6 is less clear) 16 exf6 ♘xe1 17 fxe7 ♗xg2 18 exf8♕+ ♖xf8 show that premature aggression can quickly backfire on White.

12 ... b5 *(D)*



White has finished his development and the opening is more or less over. If he wants to fight for an advantage, he must choose how to attack Black's kingside. Postponing the decision with moves such as 13 ♔h1, 13 a3 or 13 ♕h3 only increases Black's chances for a successful defence, which often in the Sicilian also means gaining the initiative.

13 e5!

This strong and consistent move opens the centre for White's pieces. It causes Black more problems than 13 g4:

1) 13...♗b7 14 g5 ♘d7 15 ♕h5 and now 15...♘b4?! is not too good, since after 16 ♖f3 ♘xd3 17 cxd3 ♖fe8 18 ♗d4!, Black doesn't have 18...g6? any more due to 19 ♕xh7+, and the advancing pawns can cause serious damage. However, the prophylactic 15...♖fe8 is more to the point.

2) The immediate 13...♖e8! is better:

2a) The speculative 14 e5 dxe5 15 g5 ♘d5 16 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 17 ♕h5+ ♔g8 18 ♖f3 g6 19 ♕h4 was played in Liss-Smirin, Tel-Aviv 1999. White's aggression is best met with 19...♗f8!? (19...exf4? loses by force to 20 ♖h3 ♕e5 21 ♕h7+! ♔f8 22 ♗d4!! ♕xe1+ 23 ♔g2; e.g., 23...♗d6 24 ♗f6) 20 ♖h3 ♗g7 21 ♕h7+ (after 21 ♗c5 f5! Black beats off the attack) 21...♔f8 22 ♗c5+ ♖e7 (22...♘de7? 23 ♘e4 is bad for Black, but 22...♘ce7 23 fxe5 ♗b7!? is probably an alternative) and White has no obvious follow-up.

2b) 14 g5 ♘d7 15 ♕h5 g6 16 ♕h4 ♗f8 with an unclear position; after all, White has lost a valuable tempo with ♕f3-h5.

13 ... dxe5

The retreat to e8 is passive and here the knight's prospects are bleak, but 13...♘d7?! 14 exd6 ♕xd6 (after 14...♗xd6? 15 ♗xb5! ♗b7 16 ♗d3 Black loses a pawn without compensation) is also far from ideal:

1) Too optimistic is 15 ♘a5?! ♘xa5 16 ♕xa8 ♗b7 17 ♕a7 b4 18 ♖d1! (otherwise White can't extricate his queen; e.g., 18 ♘e4? ♕c6 19 ♖e2 f5 20 ♘g5 ♖a8 21 ♕d4 ♗c5) 18...♕c7 19 ♗xa6 ♖a8 20 ♘b5 ♕xc2, as in Nadanian-Palević, corr. 1992. Now even after 21 ♗xb7 ♖xa7 22 ♗xa7 ♘xb7 23 ♖xd7 ♗c5+ 24 ♔h1 (24 ♗xc5? ♕xc5+ 25 ♘d4 ♕c8 26 ♖e7 ♔f8 costs White material) 24...♕e2 25 ♖fd1 h5 Black would be better.

2) 15 ♘e4 ♕c7 16 ♕h5 f5 gets White nowhere.

3) The most promising is 15 ♗e4 ♗b7 16 f5! with a dangerous initiative; e.g., 16...b4? 17 ♖d1 ♕c7 18 ♕h3! ♘f6 19 fxe6 and Black's position is falling apart.

14 fxe5 ♘d7

Too brave is 14...♘xe5? 15 ♕xa8 ♘eg4 16 g3 ♗b7 17 ♕a7 ♕c6 18 ♗e4! ♘xe4 19 ♘a5 and White wins, Lücke-Grivas, Dortmund 1992.

15 ♗f4

A new move, though it had been mentioned in earlier annotations. After the older 15 ♕h3 g6 16 ♗h6 ♖d8, the e5-pawn is in danger and White should be glad he can bail out with a perpetual after 17 ♗xg6! (the reckless attack 17 ♖xf7? ♔xf7 18 ♖f1+ ♔e8 19 ♕xe6 ♘f6 this time ends tragically for White, Zakić-Lücke, Miskolc 1990; 17 ♕f3? ♘dxe5 18 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 19 ♕xa8 ♘g4 is no improvement for White either) 17...hxg6 (17...fxg6? is playing with fire as 18 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 19 ♕f7 ♕a7+ 20 ♔h1 ♖g8 21 ♘e4 gives White a very strong attack; e.g.,

21...♘dxe5? 22 ♘g5! ♗xg5 23 ♕xg8+ mates) 18 ♗g7! ♔xg7 19 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕h7+ ♔e8 21 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 22 ♕h6+.

15 ... b4!?

This is an important *zwischenzug*, which forces White's knight back. After 15...♗b7 16 ♕g3 it might already be too late. For example, 16...♖fc8? runs into 17 ♘d5! exd5 18 e6 ♕d8 (18...♕b6+ 19 ♗e3 d4 20 ♖xf7 ♗f6 21 ♖xg7+! ♗xg7 22 ♗h6 and the attack crashes through) 19 ♗h6 (19 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 20 ♕h3+ ♔g8 21 exf7+ ♔xf7 22 ♗c7+ ♘f6 is not enough for White) 19...g6 20 ♖xf7 and Black can't parry the numerous threats such as ♗xg6 or ♖xh7. Therefore it's more prudent to play 16...g6 immediately as in the game, but after 17 ♔h1 the sacrifice on d5 continues to hang in the air.

16 ♘d1

White would be only too glad to play the active 16 ♘e4?!, but his e5-pawn is too valuable and Black can afford 16...♘dxe5 when there is nothing concrete in sight. Then 17 ♗xe5? is naïve in view of 17...♘xe5 (17...♕xe5? 18 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 19 ♕xc6) 18 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 19 ♕xa8 ♕b6+ 20 ♔h1 ♘xd3 and ...♗b7, but even 17 ♕g3 f6 or 17 ♕h3 f5 18 ♘ec5 ♗xc5+ 19 ♘xc5 ♕e7, with advantageous simplification for Black, doesn't promise White any worthwhile compensation.

16 ♘d5 exd5 17 e6 ♘de5 is not too good for White either, since even after 18 ♗xh7+ (best; 18 ♕h5 f5! 19 ♗xf5 g6 gets White nowhere) 18...♔xh7 19 ♕h5+ ♔g8 20 exf7+ ♖xf7 21 ♕xf7+ ♘xf7 22 ♗xc7 ♗b7 only Black can be better.

16 ... ♗b7

17 ♕g3 g6

Was this committal move really necessary? Attempts to avoid it deserve a closer look:

1) 17...♖fc8 18 ♘e3 is not ideal for Black either, as he currently has no realistic play on the c-file while White has not only tactical (♘f5, ♘d5), but also positional ideas as well (♘c4-d6).

2) 17...♖fd8!? is more to the point:

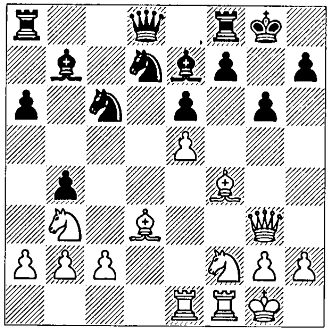
2a) The straightforward 18 ♗h6?! forces 18...g6! (not 18...♗f8? 19 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 20 ♖xf7, when the attack is too strong; a possible line leading directly to mate is 20...♔xh6 21 ♕h3+ ♔g6 22 ♕xe6+ ♔h7 23 ♖e4 ♗e7 24 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 25 ♖g4+) and White's attack lacks the necessary punch after 19 ♘f2 (now the sacrificial 19 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 is insufficient for White after 20 ♗xg6+ hxg6 21 ♖f1+ ♗f6 or 20 ♖f1+ ♔g8 21 ♗xg6 ♕xe5 22 ♕g4 ♔h8) 19...♘cxe5 (19...♘dxe5?! 20 ♗f4 ♗d6 21 ♘e4 is very risky for Black) 20 ♘g4 ♗d6.

2b) Somewhat better is 18 ♘f2 ♘f8 19 ♘e4 ♘g6 20 ♘g5, but after 20...♗xg5 21 ♗xg5 ♖d5 22 ♗e4 ♖b5! (not 22...♖xe5?! 23 ♗xg6 hxg6 24 ♘c5!, when White wins material due to the pinned rook) 23 ♗xg6 fxg6!? Black has little to complain about. Even 23...hxg6 deserves attention, as White is still far from creating serious threats on the h-file.

2c) That again brings us to 18 ♘e3! ♘f8 (18...♘cxe5? is much weaker due to 19 ♘c4 f6 20 ♕h3) 19 ♘c4, when White is better. His knight is coming to d6, and he can play ♗g5 in the foreseeable future. This line indicates that 15...b4!? had also its drawbacks.

However, after the text-move the weakened kingside dark squares become a welcome target for White.

18 ♘f2! ♕d8 *(D)*



19 ♕h3?

This is too soft, as now Black cleverly fortifies his shaky kingside defences. Black's last move has only seemingly prevented 19 ♘g4 as after 19...♗h4 20 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 21 exf6 ♗xg3 22 ♗xg3 White has a substantial advantage – Black sorely misses his important dark-squared bishop. Another tempting continuation is the aggressive 19 ♗h6. Then Black can't profit from the vulnerability of the e5-pawn: 19...♘dxe5 20 ♖xe5 ♗d6 fails to 21 ♗f4, while 19...♖e8 20 ♘g4 gives White a powerful attack.

19 ... h5!
20 ♖e3

The brutal 20 g4 gets White nowhere after 20...♗g5, so he decides to move over the reserves. However, because he has allowed ...h5, his forces have less space on the kingside. An alternative that deserves attention is 20 ♗h6!?. Although this continuation is not as strong as one move earlier, Black is well advised to refrain from the materialistic 20...♖e8?! 21 ♕g3, when the threat of ♗xg6 is serious enough; e.g., 21...♔h7 (21...h4 or 21...♗h4 22 ♕f4 only improves the position of White's queen) 22 ♘e4! ♔xh6 (22...♘dxe5 23 ♖xf7+! ♘xf7 24 ♘f6+ leads to mate) 23 ♖xf7 ♖h8 (23...♘dxe5 24 ♕f4+ g5 25 ♘xg5! ♕b6+ 26 ♔h1 ♘xf7 27 ♖xe6+ finishes Black off) 24 ♘f6 ♘dxe5 25 ♕f4+ g5 26 ♖xe5! (26 ♕e4?! is unconvincing due to 26...♕xd3! 27 cxd3 ♘xf7) 26...♘xe5 27 ♕xe5 and White's attack is decisive, the main threat being ♘g8+!. Therefore, Black must be generous: after 20...♘cxe5 (20...♘dxe5!?) 21 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 22 ♗e4 ♕b6 Black has a pawn for the exchange and his solid position is a tough nut to crack.

20 ... ♔g7
21 ♗e4 ♖h8

This is an integral part of Black's defensive plan. However, even the more active 21...♘c5!? 22 ♘xc5 (22 ♖g3? is weak due to 22...♘xe4 23 ♘xe4 ♘d4) 22...♗xc5 is interesting:

1) 23 ♖g3 ♘d4! (23...♕d4? 24 ♕xh5! ♕xe4 25 ♕h6+ ♔g8 and now 26 ♖h3? ♕xg2+! 27 ♔xg2 ♘d4+ is not clear, but the correct 26 ♗e3! ♕xe5 27 ♘g4 wins immediately) 24 ♗d3 (24 ♕xh5 ♗xe4 25 ♕h6+ ♔g8 26 ♖h3 ♘e2+ 27 ♔h1 ♗xg2+ 28 ♔xg2 ♕d5+ forces White away from the h-file) 24...♖h8 25 ♗g5 ♗e7 26 ♗xe7 (26 ♕h4 ♘f5! 27 ♗xf5 ♗xg5 fully suits Black) 26...♕xe7 gets White nowhere, as his pieces are in each other's way.

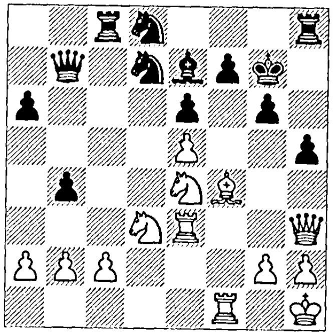
2) 23 ♖d3 ♕c7 (23...♕e7? 24 ♖g3! ♘d4 25 ♗d3 and the bishop comes to f6 with tempo) 24 ♖fd1 ♖ad8 is far from clear, especially as the complications after 25 ♗g5?! ♗xf2+ 26 ♔xf2 ♘xe5! 27 ♖xd8 (27 ♗xd8 ♕c5+! 28 ♖e3 ♘g4+ 29 ♕xg4 hxg4 30 ♗xb7 ♕xc2+ favours Black) 27...♖xd8 28 ♗xd8 ♕c5+ 29 ♔f1 ♗xe4 are dangerous for White.

22 ♘d3 ♕b6
23 ♔h1 ♘d8!

Black overprotects f7, in the meantime planning counterplay on the c-file.

24 ♘d2 ♖c8
25 ♗xb7 ♕xb7
26 ♘c4 *(D)*

B



The series of logical moves continues. As passive defence of the pawn would definitely be inconsistent, White abandons his queenside and concentrates all his forces on the opposite flank. However, his attack still doesn't proceed too smoothly, the main and practically permanent problem being his weak back rank.

26 ... ♖xc2
27 ♗g5 ♗xg5
28 ♘xg5 ♘c5

28...♘b6!? 29 ♖ef3 (29 ♘f4 is weaker owing to 29...♘c4) 29...♘d5 doesn't let the knight come to f4. Now the simplifying 30 ♘xf7? ♘xf7 31 ♖xf7+ ♕xf7 32 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 33 ♕f3+ ♔g7 is advantageous for Black, because White has no attacking potential left. However, after the patient 30 ♘e4!? the position remains unclear, as White still retains unpleasant pressure.

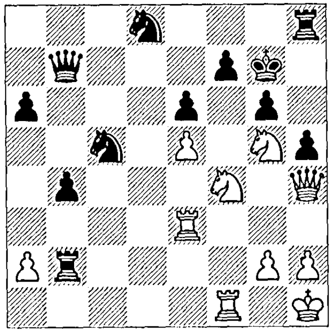
29 ♘f4 ♖xb2
30 ♕h4! *(D)*
30 ... b3!?

Black has increased his material advantage, but White's attack has also grown stronger, with sacrifices on f7 or g6 already becoming real threats:

1) Black has no time for 30...♖xa2 in view of 31 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 32 ♖g3; e.g., 32...♘d7 33 ♖xg6+ ♕xg6 34 ♕e7+! ♕f7 35 ♘xe6+ and White wins.

2) Smirin's active continuation is playable, but 30...♔g8 with the idea of bringing the queen closer to the danger zone was also possible:

B



2a) The patient 31 ♖ef3 ♕c7 32 ♘xg6 (...♘e4 was already a threat and 32 ♕g3 h4 33 ♕g4 ♔g7 34 ♖h3 ♖xa2 35 ♖xh4 fails to 35...♘e4 36 ♖xh8 ♘f2+!, when Black wins) 32...fxg6 33 ♖f6 ♔g7 (33...♖h6? loses to 34 ♕d4, as White not only attacks the rook, but also threatens ♖f8+) 34 ♘f7 ♘xf7 35 ♖xg6+ (35 ♖xf7+ ♕xf7 36 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 37 ♕f6+ ♔e8! 38 ♕xh8+ ♔d7 and when Black's king hides, the b-pawn will become very dangerous) 35...♔f8 36 ♖xf7+ ♕xf7 (36...♔xf7 37 ♖g7+ also leads to a perpetual) 37 ♕d8+ ♕e8 38 ♕f6+ ♕f7 is enough only for a repetition.

2b) More interesting is the violent idea 31 ♘xf7!? ♘xf7 (31...♕xf7? 32 ♖g3! forces Black to protect g6 by 32...♖h6, and after 33 ♕xd8+ ♔h7 34 ♖gf3 White has an extra tempo compared with the game and he wins easily) 32 ♕f6 (this gives Black more chances to go wrong than 32 ♖g3 g5 33 ♖xg5+ ♘xg5 34 ♕xg5+ ♕g7 35 ♘g6 ♖h6 36 ♕d8+ ♔h7 37 ♘f8+ ♔h8!, when White's weak back rank again thwarts any winning attempts) 32...g5 (after 32...♖h6 33 ♖g3 ♘h8, 34 ♘xg6 is a draw, but White can try the more testing 34 ♘xe6!? ♘xe6 35 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 36 ♖gf3 with the idea ♕e8, as the extra knight on h8 is hardly felt at all and moreover White always has a draw at will) 33 ♖g3 and now:

2b1) 33...h4 is bad in view of 34 ♘h5! ♖xh5 35 ♕g6+ ♔f8 36 ♖gf3 ♕xf3 37 ♖xf3, when b1 is protected from a distance.

2b2) After 33...♘e4 34 ♕g6+ ♔f8 35 ♘xe6+ ♔e8 36 ♖gf3 g4 37 ♕xf7+ (White naturally avoids the trick 37 ♖xf7?? ♘g3+!) 37...♕xf7 38 ♖xf7 the attack will decide the game despite the exchange of queens, as the e-pawn is too strong.

2b3) Black's best is 33...♖h6! 34 ♘g6 ♖b1! 35 ♖xb1 ♘e4! (all forced; after the tempting 35...♕e4? 36 ♖f1 ♕xg6 37 ♕e7 ♘e4 38 ♖g1 White's attack triumphs) 36 ♘e7+ (36 ♕xe6 ♔g7 37 ♕e7 is also about equal) 36...♔f8 and once again White must resign himself to a draw with 37 ♘g6+.

31 ♘xf7!

Energetic and consistent. After 31 axb3 ♖xb3 White's rook can't join the attack via the third rank any more. However, surprisingly enough White would still have enough resources to save the game: 32 ♘gh3 ♘d7! (32...♖xe3? loses to 33 ♕f6+ and 32...♔h7 is risky since after 33 ♖xb3 ♕xb3 34 ♘xh5! the knight is taboo because of 34...gxh5? 35 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 36 ♕g5+ ♔h7 37 ♕h4+ ♔g7 38 ♕f6+) 33 ♘xg6! ♕b5 (33...♖xe3? is weak due to 34 ♘xh8, and after 33...fxg6 34 ♖xb3 White has at least a draw) 34 ♘xh8! (34 ♖ee1?! ♖xh3! again puts White on the brink of defeat) 34...♕xf1+ 35 ♘g1 ♖xe3 36 ♕g5+ with another of the numerous perpetuals.

31 ... ♕xf7

31...♔xf7? loses immediately to 32 ♕f6+ ♔g8 33 ♖g3, while 31...♘xf7? is not much better due to 32 ♕f6+:

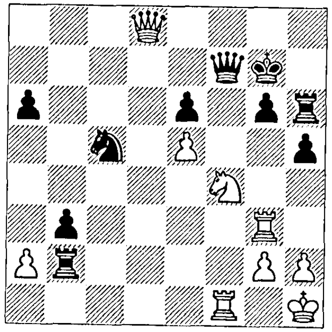
1) 32...♔f8 33 ♘xe6+ ♘xe6 (33...♔e8 34 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 35 e6! and practically Black's whole army is *en prise*) 34 ♕xh8+ ♔e7 35 ♕f6+ ♔f8 36 ♖ef3 ♘eg5 37 e6 ♘xf3 38 ♕xb2 is hopeless for Black.

2) 32...♔g8 33 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 34 ♖ef3 ♔e8 (34...bxa2 35 ♘d5 is the end immediately) 35 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 36 ♕xe6+ ♕e7 37 ♕c6+! ♕d7 38 ♕g6 also sees Black losing by force.

32 ♖g3 ♖h6?!

The critical moment. Black should have consistently pursued his own active plans with 32...bxa2! 33 ♖xg6+ ♕xg6 34 ♘xg6 (34 ♕e7+? loses to 34...♕f7, since compared with note '1' to Black's 30th move, e6 is protected twice) 34...♖b1 35 ♕f6+ ♔h7 36 ♘xh8 (36 ♕xh8+ ♔xg6 is a draw, since the a2-pawn is too powerful) 36...♘e4! (not 36...a1♕? 37 ♕g6+ ♔xh8 38 ♖xb1 ♕d4 39 ♖f1, when the attack triumphs) 37 ♕f3 (37 ♕f4? even loses, to 37...♘d2!, while after 37 ♕g6+ ♔xh8 White again has only a perpetual) 37...♔xh8 (37...♘d2!?) with an inevitable draw.

33 ♕xd8 *(D)*



33 ... ♔h7?

Only this final mistake clarifies the issue:

1) 33...♕xf4 34 ♖gf3 ♕xf3 35 gxf3 bxa2 36 ♕e7+ ♔g8 37 ♕xc5 ♖b1 38 ♕c8+ ♔f7 39 ♕d7+ ♔g8 40 ♕d3! a1♕ 41 ♖xb1 is hopeless, as Black either loses his queen or gets mated.

2) The last and only chance was again 33...bxa2! 34 ♖gf3! (after 34 ♘xh5+ ♖xh5 35 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 36 ♖f3+ ♖f5 White has to give a perpetual) 34...♖b7 and now:

2a) It appears that White is winning after 35 ♘d3 ♕xf3 36 gxf3 ♖b1 37 ♘xc5 ♖xf1+ 38 ♔g2, threatening ♘xe6+ with mate. However, after the fantastic 38...g5!! 39 ♕e7+ ♔h8 40 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 White has only a draw.

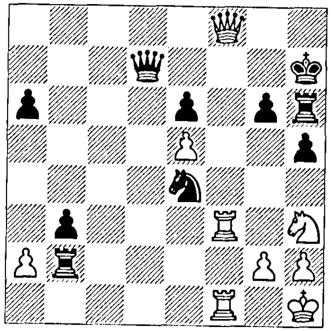
2b) 35 ♕d6 g5 36 ♘d5 exd5! (36...♕xf3 37 gxf3 ♖b1 38 ♕e7+ ♔g6 39 ♕f6+ ♔h7 40 ♕f7+ ♔h8 41 ♘f6! ♖xf1+ 42 ♔g2 ♖g1+ 43 ♔h3 g4+ 44 ♔h4 ♖xf6 45 exf6 gxf3 46 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 47 f7+ ♔g7 48 ♕xc5 annihilates Black's forces) 37 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 38 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 39 ♕xd5+ ♖e6 is a less promising version of line '2c' below.

2c) Even after the straightforward 35 ♘xe6+ ♕xe6 36 ♕f8+ ♔h7 37 ♖f7+ ♖xf7 38 ♖xf7+ ♕xf7 39 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 40 ♕xa2 g5 White's task is not so easy. If Black manages to transfer his knight to g7 and play ...g4, he just shuffles his rook along his third rank and his fortress is perfect even without the a-pawn. White can prevent this by, e.g., 41 ♕d2 ♘e6 42 h4, but the outcome of the game still remains open.

34 ♖gf3 ♕d7

34...bxa2 35 ♘xe6 ♕xf3 36 ♕e7+ mates; 34...♕g7 35 ♘h3 doesn't help Black either.

35 ♕f8 ♘e4
36 ♘h3! *(D)*



1-0

White protects f2 and invades via the f-file.

Summary

This game well shows both the bright and shady sides of the currently most popular defence against 1 e4. Black chooses a very provocative line with 4...♕b6?!, which actually leads to known positions with an extra tempo for White. Since in a sharp Sicilian time is worth a lot, consistent and energetic play gave the well-prepared Lutz an attacking position and the advantage after 15 ♗f4. Furthermore, in his hurry to close the dangerous b1-h7 diagonal, Black somewhat prematurely played 17...g6, creating gaping dark-square holes around his king. However, one or two slightly hesitant moves (20 ♖e3 and especially 19 ♕h3?) were enough to make the position unclear again; after the resourceful 19...h5!, White's pieces found it difficult to get directly at Black's shaky but sufficiently protected kingside. In the Sicilian you are often either up or down; White started to feel he had vulnerable points of his own: first his isolated e5-pawn, later after Black safeguarded his king (21...♖h8 and 23...♘d8!), c2 became sensitive.

In this tense situation White made the best of his remaining attacking chances and gradually continued to pile up his forces against Black's king regardless of material. It was more practical to keep White's d3-knight away from the fray by 28...♘b6!?, but Smirin fearlessly annihilated White's queenside and the tension culminated after 30 ♕h4!. As the analysis indicates, objectively the equilibrium remained undisturbed, but to defend against numerous tactical threats just before the time-control is a thankless task. And sure enough Black failed to make the most of his trumps (strong passed pawn, White's weak back rank) and he omitted 32...bxa2! and 33...bxa2! White's attack finally triumphed.

Game 50

Vishy Anand – Alexander Khalifman

FIDE World Cup, Shenyang 2000

Sicilian Defence, Najdorf/Scheveningen Variation [B80]

1 e4 c5
2 ♘f3 d6
3 d4 cxd4
4 ♘xd4 ♘f6
5 ♘c3 a6
6 ♗e3 e6

Anand allows the sortie 6...♘g4, which has been doing quite well for Black lately. One can only speculate what he had in mind, but recently 6 ♗e3 has very often served purely reconnaissance purposes: White just takes the move back with 7 ♗c1 ♘f6 and then continues 8 f3 as in Game 40.

7 f3

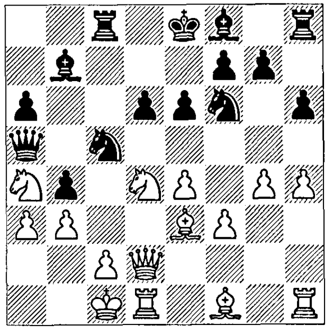
7 g4!? e5 8 ♘f5 g6 9 g5 (or even 9 ♗g2 d5!? 10 ♗g5 gxf5) 9...gxf5 10 exf5 d5 is another topical ultra-sharp line, with Shirov currently its foremost fan.

7 ... b5
8 g4 h6
9 ♕d2 ♘bd7
10 0-0-0 ♗b7
11 h4 b4
12 ♘a4 ♕a5
13 b3 ♘c5
14 a3 ♖c8!? *(D)*

Gelfand's newer move; the reason why it became popular (as well as more details about the opening) can be found in the annotations to Game 40.

15 ♕xb4

White must meet the ...♘xb3+ threat. Ignoring it with 15 axb4 ♘xb3+ 16 ♘xb3 ♕xa4 17 ♔b2 is risky, since after the direct 17...d5! 18 ♘c5 ♕c6 (18...♗xc5?! 19 ♗xc5 dxe4 20 b5 is dangerous for both Black's king and queen; the threats are ♕d6 and ♖a1) the queenside weaknesses are starting to be exposed. For example, the seemingly natural 19 e5 ♘d7 20 ♘xd7? runs into 20...♗xb4!.



15 ... ♕c7

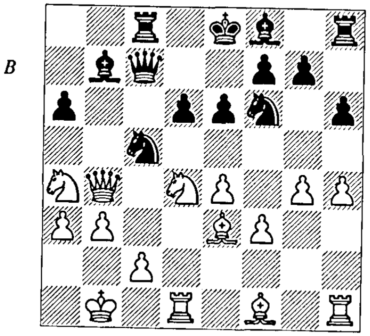
The point of Gelfand's idea. 15...♕xb4 is weak due to 16 axb4 ♘xa4 17 bxa4 d5 18 e5 ♘d7 19 b5. Although after the text-move White is a pawn up, his queenside is vulnerable and both his queen and the a4-knight are misplaced. If Black manages to finish his development successfully, his initiative could become threatening.

16 ♔b1!? *(D)*

Anand is the first to come up with a novelty. Previously White played solely 16 ♘xc5 dxc5 17 ♕a4+ ♘d7 18 ♘e2 c4! 19 ♗f4!? (19 b4 ♗c6 20 ♕xa6 ♖a8 21 ♕xc4 ♖xa3 22 ♗f4 ♕b7 with a dangerous attack, Anand-Gelfand, Monaco Amber rpd 2000) 19...♕c6 20 ♕xc6 ♗xa3+ 21 ♔b1 and now:

1) 21...♖xc6 22 ♘d4 ♖c8 23 ♗xc4! e5 24 ♘f5 is risky for Black, Ernst-Agrest, Swedish Ch (Örebro) 2000. One of the ideas behind the piece sacrifice is 24...♖xc4 25 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 26 ♘f5+ ♔e6? 27 ♗c1!.

2) Stronger and safer is 21...♗xc6 22 ♘d4 e5!? 23 ♘xc6 ♖xc6 (23...exf4 24 ♘d4 ♘e5 is also playable) 24 ♗g3 cxb3 25 cxb3 ♔e7 with approximate equality.



16 ... ♘cd7

Here Khalifman sank into deep thought, which led to him being in acute time-trouble later on in the critical phase of the game. Afterwards he claimed being unable to recall his preparation, which concentrated on a different move, namely...

1) 16...d5 17 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 18 ♕a4+. As Black's suggestion has not yet been tested in practice, one can only speculate about his intentions:

1a) 18...♘d7 19 b4 ♗xd4 20 ♗xd4 e5 (20...0-0!?) and now:

1a1) 21 ♗b2 dxe4 22 ♗xa6 (22 ♗c4?! ♗c6 23 ♕b3 ♘b6 works well for Black) 22...♗xa6 23 ♕xa6 0-0 (23...exf3 24 ♕d3! traps the king in the centre) 24 fxe4 and White is better; e.g., 24...♕xc2+ 25 ♔a2 ♕xe4 26 ♕d3.

1a2) 21 ♗e3!? dxe4 22 ♗c4 ♗c6 23 ♕b3 is also promising for White; after 23...0-0 24 g5! with the idea ♗xf7+ he has a powerful attack.

1b) More active is 18...♔e7! 19 b4 ♗d6 (19...♗b6 allows 20 e5! ♕xe5 21 ♘f5+ exf5 22 ♗xb6, exposing Black's king) with a complicated position.

2) A subsequent game saw the continuation 16...♘fd7!? 17 ♘b2 d5 18 ♕e1 (18 ♕d2 dxe4 and now 19 b4 exf3 20 bxc5 ♘xc5 gives Black ample compensation; 19 f4!? is a possible improvement, although the resulting position is anything but clear) 18...dxe4 19 ♗c4 (19 b4? is weak in view of 19...exf3 20 bxc5 f2) 19...e5 20 ♘f5 g6 21 ♘g3 exf3 22 h5 g5 23 ♖f1 ♗g7 24 ♗d5 ♗xd5 25 ♖xd5 0-0 and Black went on to win quickly in de la Riva-Van Wely, Mondariz Z 2000.

Probably both suggested moves are better than Khalifman's choice, although they still leave a lot of questions unanswered.

17 ♕d2

The weaker 17 ♕c4 d5! 18 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 19 exd5 ♘xd5 suits Black, as after 20 ♗c1 ♘7b6! or 20 ♗d2 ♗xa3 he has solved his problems with his king and his development.

17 ... d5
18 ♗h3

A typical way to put pressure on the e6-pawn. After 18 exd5 ♘xd5 19 c4 (19 ♔b2 ♗e7!? and ...♗f6 gives Black a lot of play for a small price) 19...♘xe3 20 ♕xe3 ♗xa3 the only real source of danger for Black might be an immediate sacrifice on e6. True enough, 21 ♘xe6 (21 g5 ♕e5!?) 21...fxe6 22 ♕xe6+ ♗e7 23 ♗d3 ♕c6!? looks very threatening, but White has nothing concrete; for example, after 24 ♗g6+ ♔d8 25 ♗f5 ♕xe6 26 ♗xe6 ♖c7 27 ♘b6 ♗c6 28 ♖xd7+?, 28...♗xd7 29 ♖d1 ♖c6! enables Black to stay a full piece up.

18 ... dxe4
19 g5 hxg5

A necessary interpolation. 19...♘d5? is out of the question due to 20 g6.

20 hxg5 ♘d5
21 fxe4?!

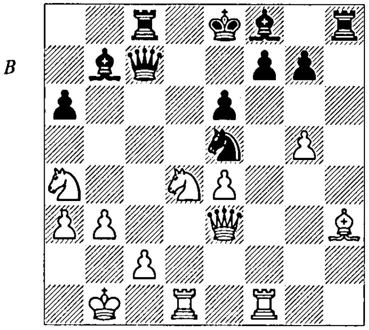
Now after 21 g6? ♖xh3! 22 ♖xh3 ♘xe3 23 ♕xe3 e5 24 gxf7+ ♔xf7 25 fxe4 exd4 Black gains material and an advantage. The text-move is logical, but the position that arises will be far from clear. Therefore the alternative 21 ♗xe6!? ♖xh1 (21...fxe6 22 ♖xh8 ♘xe3 23 ♕xe3 e5 24 fxe4 exd4 25 ♕f2 is much more dangerous than the line after 21 g6?; White's attack is far too powerful) 22 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 23 ♖xh1 exf3 24 ♗f2!? was preferable. White's main threat is c4 and ♘b6, while Black's king is in more danger than its white counterpart due to ideas such as ♖e1+ and ♖h8.

21 ... ♘xe3
22 ♕xe3 ♘e5!

As 22...♖xh3? loses at once to 23 ♕xh3 e5 24 ♘e6! ♕xc2+ 25 ♔a1, Black parries the immediate ♗xe6 threat and sensibly looks for compensation in the form of piece-play on the dark squares. It's becoming more and more clear that White has no other use for his bishop than to sacrifice it.

23 ♖hf1 *(D)*

23 ♔b2?! ♖h4 is naturally too passive for White; he has no time for such trifles as the a3-pawn.



23 ... ♗xa3!

Black trusts the inherent solidity of his position and takes the offered pawn. A bold decision, but Khalifman probably intuitively realized that Black can't sufficiently stabilize the position to make his positional pluses tell. The main alternative is 23...g6 (23...♖h4? is weak due to 24 ♗xe6! ♖xe4 25 ♕f2), but although retaining the strong e5-knight increases Black's chances in any tactical skirmish, the weakening of f6 also gives White extra tactical possibilities. White's most direct continuation is the immediate 24 ♗xe6! (24 ♖d2 is playable, but less incisive) 24...fxe6 25 ♕f4! (25 ♘xe6? ♕xc2+ 26 ♔a1 ♖h2! 27 ♖xf8+ ♔e7 leads to White being mated), and now:

1) 25...♗e7 26 ♘xe6 ♕xc2+ 27 ♔a1 ♖g8 (27...♖h7? 28 ♕xe5 ♕xb3 29 ♕h8+!) 28 ♕xe5 (after 28 ♘b6?!, 28...♕xb3? 29 ♖d8+! ♗xd8 30 ♘g7+! is a pretty line, but Black can instead give a perpetual with 28...♕c3+) 28...♕xb3 29 ♘b2 ♕xa3+ 30 ♔b1. Material is now equal, but White's attack is far more dangerous and should decide the game shortly.

2) 25...♘f7 26 ♕f6 e5 (26...♗xa3 27 ♘b6! doesn't help Black; 26...♕e7 27 ♕xg6 ♖h4 28 ♖de1! is also very good for White, as Black can't defend e6) 27 ♘c6! ♖h7 (27...♗xc6? 28 ♕e6+) 28 ♕e6+ ♗e7 29 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 30 ♕xg6 and again White has a tremendous attack 'for free'; e.g., 30...♖h4 31 ♘c5!.

3) 25...♗d6 26 ♕f6! (26 ♘xe6? ♕xc2+ 27 ♔a1 ♖f8! 28 ♘xf8 ♕xb3, with the point 29 ♖xd6 ♕xa3+ 30 ♔b1 ♕b4+, wins for Black) 26...♖h7 (after 26...♖h2, 27 ♘c6! forces Black to return the piece with 27...♕f7; 26...♖f8 27 ♕xe6+ ♕e7 28 ♖xf8+ leads to the same position as the main move) 27 ♖h1!? and now even the natural 27...♖f7 (27...♖e7? loses to 28 ♘xe6 ♕xc2+ 29 ♔a1) 28 ♕xe6+ ♕e7 29 ♖h8+ ♖f8 30 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 31 ♕h3! is no fun for Black, since with various knight jumps in the air (♘e6, ♘b6) White has a dangerous attack.

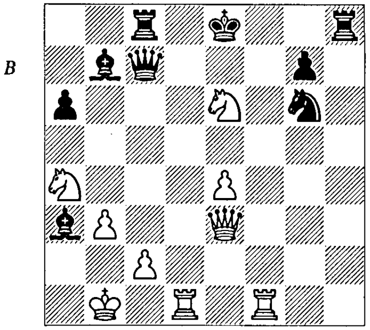
24 g6!?

With the centralized knight after 24 ♗xe6 fxe6 25 ♘xe6 ♕e7!? (if Black is too afraid, he can force White to give a perpetual check with 25...♕xc2+ 26 ♔a1 ♖h2 27 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 28 ♘f5+) 26 ♕b6 ♗c6 White's compensation is very vague. The text-move not only misplaces the knight, but also frees g5 for White's queen and gives the attack a fresh new impulse.

24 ... ♘xg6
25 ♗xe6!

This is consistent. White has to prevent Black from consolidating and for this he needs a knight on e6. 25 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 26 ♗xe6 ♕c7 27 ♕g5 ♘e5 gets White nowhere; e.g., 28 ♘b6 ♖d8 29 ♗d7+ ♖xd7 30 ♘xd7 ♘f7!. The same goes for 25 ♘xe6 fxe6 26 ♗xe6 ♘e5 (or even 26...♕xc2+!? 27 ♔a1 ♘e5).

25 ... fxe6
26 ♘xe6 *(D)*



Black's king is in grave danger, as White controls the adjoining files and his e6-knight is a tower of strength. Khalifman's situation was complicated by his lack of time; with only about three minutes on the clock he succumbs to the pressure.

26 ... ♕e7?

A serious mistake. The other moves at Black's disposal were:

1) 26...♕xc2+? 27 ♔a1 and there is no effective defence against ♘xg7+ and ♕g5+; e.g., 27...♖g8 28 ♕g5 ♘e7 29 ♖f8+! ♖xf8 30 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 31 ♖f1+ with a quick mate.

2) Therefore the queen must stay by her king, but without smothering him. Black has to play the cold-blooded 26...♕e5! 27 ♕b6. Now the attacked bishop must move:

2a) 27...♗c6 is not best: 28 ♖d8+ ♔e7 29 ♕a7+ (Black beats off the attack after 29 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 30 ♕a7+ ♗d7; the extravagant 29 ♘f8 ♖xf8 30 ♖fxf8 ♘xf8 31 ♖xc8 ♗xa4 32 bxa4 ♕xe4 is also unpromising for White) 29...♖c7! 30 ♘xc7 (30 ♖e8+ ♔xe8 31 ♘xc7+ ♔d8 leads to the same position) 30...♔xd8 31 ♖d1+ ♗d6 (31...♗d7? 32 ♘xa6 ♘f8 33 ♘6c5 gives White a winning attack), when White has more than one way to reach at least a draw and Black still has to be careful:

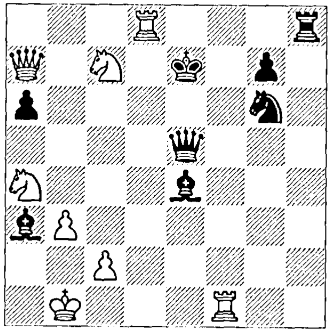
2a1) 32 ♘xa6 ♔e8 33 ♕b6 ♘e7 is too inconclusive.

2a2) 32 ♘b6 ♗xe4 33 ♘c4 allows Black to bail out with a perpetual by 33...♗xc2+ 34 ♔xc2 ♖h2+ 35 ♔b1 ♕f5+.

2a3) White can give a perpetual himself by 32 ♕b6 ♔d7 33 ♘c5+ (33 ♘xa6 ♗xa4 34 bxa4 ♔e7 35 ♕b7+ ♔f6 36 ♕b6 ♔e6 37 ♕b3+ is another way) 33...♔e7 34 ♕xc6 ♕xc5 35 ♘d5+ ♔e6 36 ♘c7+.

2a4) 32 ♘c5!? is more ambitious, but even here after 32...♘e7 33 ♕b6 ♔c8 34 ♘7e6 ♗xc5 35 ♘xc5 ♕c7 36 ♕xa6+ ♔b8 37 ♖d4 ♕a7 38 ♘d7+! ♔a8! Black has sufficient defensive resources and White must take the perpetual with 39 ♘b6+.

2b) However, 27...♗xe4! is stronger; then it is White who has to fight for survival. Again the best is 28 ♖d8+ (28 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 gets White nowhere and 28 ♖de1 is too artificial; a possible line is 28...♖h4 29 ♖f5!? ♗xf5 30 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 31 ♘xg7+ ♔f7 and as White can't play 32 ♘xf5? ♖h1+ 33 ♔a2 ♖xc2+ 34 ♔xa3 ♖a1+ 35 ♔b4 ♘c6+, he has only 32 ♕b7+ ♗d7 33 ♕d5+ with problematic drawing chances) 28...♔e7 29 ♕a7+ (29 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 30 ♕a7+ ♔xe6 31 ♕f7+ ♔d6 32 ♖d1+ ♗d5 is insufficient for White, while after 29 ♘f8 ♘xf8! 30 ♖xc8 ♘d7 31 ♕xa6 ♖xc8 32 ♕xc8 ♕b5 he must go in for a dreary endgame by 33 ♕c4) 29...♖c7 30 ♘xc7 *(D)* and Black now has two options:



2b1) After 30...♗xc2+ 31 ♔xc2 (31 ♔a2? ♔xd8 and d1 is protected) 31...♖h2+ 32 ♔b1 (32 ♖d2? ♕e4+! 33 ♔c3 ♖h3+ mates) 32...♖b2+ (32...♔xd8 33 ♖d1+ can be dangerous only for Black; it's necessary to occupy the d-file first) 33 ♔a1 ♖d2+! 34 ♖d4! (the only move; after 34 ♔b1? ♔xd8 35 ♕b8+ ♔d7 36 ♖f7+ ♘e7 37 ♘b6+ ♔c6 the checks end and Black's attack decides) 34...♕xd4+ (34...♖xd4? 35 ♘d5+ ♔d6 36 ♕xa6+ ♔xd5 37 ♘c3+ ♔c5 38 ♖f5! costs Black his queen) 35 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 36 ♘xa6 the exciting complications result in a dull endgame. Black is better, but due to the vast simplification White should be able to hold the game.

2b2) The other try is 30...♔xd8 31 ♖d1+ ♗d6 32 ♘c5 (here White has no alternative possibility; 32 ♘b6? ♗xc2+! mates and 32 ♕b6 ♔e7 gets him nowhere) 32...♗xc2+ 33 ♔a2! and now:

2b21) After 33...♗xd1 34 ♘7e6+ ♕xe6 35 ♘xe6+ ♔c8 36 ♘c5 White doesn't risk losing, as Black's king is too vulnerable.

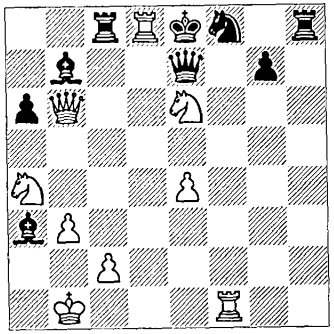
2b22) 33...♗xb3+ 34 ♔xb3 ♖h3+ 35 ♔a4 and Black does best to give a perpetual with 35...♖h4+ 36 ♔b3, because after the grotesque 35...♕e4+?! 36 ♔a5 ♖a3+ 37 ♔b6 ♖b3+ 38 ♘xb3 ♕b4+ 39 ♔xa6 ♕a4+ 40 ♘a5 (40 ♔b6? ♕xb3+ 41 ♔c6? loses to 41...♘e7+) 40...♕xd1 41 ♘b5!? White's king is safe and it's Black who has to be careful.

2b23) 33...♗f5!? 34 ♖xd6+ (34 ♘b7+? ♔e7 35 ♘xd6 ♖h2+ mates) 34...♕xd6 35 ♘b7+ ♔xc7 36 ♘xd6+ ♔xd6 37 ♕xg7 (37 ♕xa6+ is weaker due to 37...♔e7) 37...♔e6 38 ♕d4!. Black can't retain his last pawn without allowing a perpetual, so White should be able to hold the unusual endgame.

27 ♕b6 ♘f8

27...♗xe4? 28 ♘xg7+! ♕xg7 29 ♕e6+, mating, clearly shows the main difference in comparison with the previous note. ♘xg7+ is also White's main threat, while the secondary tactical motif that decides after any other move is illustrated by 27...♗c6 28 ♖d8+! ♖xd8 29 ♕xc6+ ♖d7 30 ♘b6!, when there is no defence against ♕c8+ and ♘c7+; e.g., 30...♗d6 31 ♘d5! ♘e5 (31...♕xe6 32 ♕c8+) 32 ♕c8+ ♖d8 33 ♘dc7+. Also 27...♘e5 28 ♖d8+! ♖xd8 29 ♘c7+ and 27...♖h6 28 ♖d8+! ♖xd8 29 ♘c7+ are worse than the text for Black, as he can't even fight on by giving up his queen. In the second case this loses on the spot after 29...♕xc7 30 ♕xc7 ♖d7 31 ♕b8+ ♔e7 32 ♕g8.

28 ♖d8+! *(D)*



Although we have already mentioned this blow, it still creates a lasting impression.

28 ... ♖xd8
29 ♘c7+ ♕xc7

Forced, as after 29...♔d7 30 ♕xb7 ♔d6 31 ♖f5 (or even 31 ♘b6!? with the idea that 31...♕xc7 is met by 32 e5+) White will quickly mate Black's trapped king.

30 ♕xc7 ♖d7

Materially speaking Black is quite well-off, but his pieces lack coordination and his king is permanently exposed. Although his defensive resources are not yet fully exhausted, in practice, with little time left on the clock, Black's task is more or less hopeless.

31 ♕b8+

An enticing alternative is 31 ♕e5+!? ♔d8 (31...♗e7 is weaker due to 32 ♘c5), and now:

1) 32 ♕a5+ ♖c7 33 ♖d1+ ♘d7 34 ♘b6 ♗xe4 and now:

1a) 35 ♖xd7+ releases the tension too soon. After 35...♖xd7 36 ♘xd7+ ♔xd7 37 ♕xa3 ♗b7 it may well prove impossible for White to win this position.

1b) 35 ♔a2!? ♖h1! (35...♗xc2? loses to 36 ♔xa3 ♗xd1 37 ♘d5) 36 ♖xd7+ ♖xd7 37 ♘xd7+ ♔xd7 38 ♕xa3 ♗b7 and again we have a similar position to line '1a'.

2) 32 ♘b6 is more to the point. After the forced 32...♗d6 33 ♕g5+ White has excellent winning chances, especially as 33...♖e7? 34 ♖d1 ♔c7 35 ♘c4 leads to heavy losses for Black without the desired simplification.

31 ... ♔e7
32 ♕e5+ ♘e6

32...♔d8 33 ♘b6 transposes to note '2' to White's 31st move.

33 ♖g1!

White's rook joins the attack. 33 ♘b6? is inaccurate due to 33...♗d6!, when White's queen must leave its active outpost.

33 ... ♔f7?!

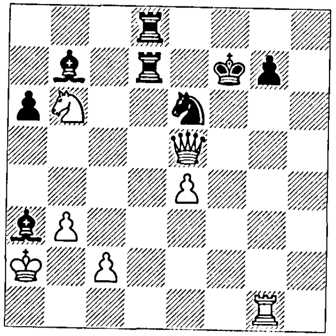
Now Black's position will rapidly go downhill. After 33...♖h6 34 ♖xg7+ (34 ♘b6 ♗d6! 35 ♕b2 ♖c7 36 ♘d5+ ♔f7 is unclear) 34...♔e8 35 ♕b8+ ♘d8 36 ♖g8+ ♗f8 37 ♘c5 the concentrated pressure of White's forces is too much to cope with. Even 33...♖g8!? 34 ♖g6 (again 34 ♘b6 ♗d6 35 ♕f5 g6! is not ideal for White) 34...♖d6 35 ♔a2 ♗c1 36 ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 37 ♕c7+ ♔f6 38 ♕xb7 gives White a marked advantage, but this was relatively Black's best chance.

34 ♘b6 ♖hd8

Black loses at once after 34...♖dd8 35 ♖f1+ ♔e7 36 ♘d5+ or 34...♗c6 35 ♕f5+ ♔e7 36 ♖g6 ♖d6 37 e5, and the same goes for 34...♖e7 35 ♖f1+ ♔e8 36 ♕b8+ ♘d8 37 ♖d1 ♔f7 38 ♕f4+! ♔e8 39 ♖xd8+ with mate.

35 ♔a2 *(D)*

Even cleaner than 35 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 36 ♖g6! ♖d6 37 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 38 ♕f4+, when White wins the b7-bishop.



35 ... ♗f8

Now Anand wraps up the game with a few forceful moves, but Black had no satisfactory defence anyway:

1) 35...♖d6 36 ♘c4 ♗c5 37 ♕f5+ ♔e7 (the alternatives 37...♔g8 38 ♘xd6 ♖xd6 39 ♖f1 and 37...♔e8 38 ♖f1! don't help Black) 38 ♘e5 ♖b8 (38...♖8d7 loses to 39 ♖h1! ♔d8 40 ♖h8+ ♔c7 41 ♘xd7 ♔xd7 42 e5 and ♕f7+) 39 ♕f7+ ♔d8 40 ♖h1 ♔c8 41 ♖h8+ ♘d8 42 ♕c4 and White wins more material.

2) 35...♗c5 36 ♕f5+ ♔e7 37 ♖g6 ♖d6 38 ♖xe6+ ♖xe6 39 ♕xc5+ ♔e8 40 ♕h5+ ♔e7 41 ♕h4+! ♔e8 42 ♕h8+ and the b7-bishop falls.

36 ♘xd7 ♖xd7
37 ♕f5+ ♔e7
38 ♖f1 ♗c8

Even after other moves Black can't avoid losing a piece.

39 ♕f7+ ♔d6
40 e5+! 1-0

Summary

The opening shows how far this complex line had developed in the mere one and a half years since Game 40 was played. Anand's novelty 16 ♔b1!? was a natural attempt to improve White's play and one can easily believe that Khalifman had anticipated it. The strange fact that he sidestepped his own preparation is not so ridiculous as it seems – 16...d5 is a committal alternative and forgetting some important tactical detail could well cost Black dearly. In the following moves the tension grew and showed also on White, as 21 fxe4?! was not an ideal solution. 21 ♗xe6!? in comparison has more than one advantage: it exposes Black's king by opening the e-file without sacrificing material and gives White a large choice of attacking possibilities. On the other hand, in the game Anand had only one active motif, but it was virtually unstoppable and he consistently and energetically realized it (24 g6!? and 25 ♗xe6!).

The critical position of the fight arose after 26 ♘xe6; Black's passive reaction was in a higher sense the losing move. Anand demonstrated that 26...♕e7? doesn't stop ♖d8+ at all and only enhances the strength of this blow. The notes show that 26...♕e5! on the other hand would have given Black real chances to harass White's king rather than just warding off the threats. In the position after 30 ♕xc7 White calmly and quietly improved all his pieces (33 ♖g1!, 35 ♔a2), and the combined pressure of his well-coordinated army and the ticking clock proved too much for Black.

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C07 *123*; C18 *43*

Grünfeld Defence
D70 *198*; D85 *296*

King's Indian Defence
E87 *56*; E97 *180*

Modern Benoni
A70 *171*

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E20 *263*

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C43 *146*

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B07 *236*

Queen's Gambit Accepted
D26 *187*

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D31 *31*, *252*; D32 *20*

Queen's Indian Defence
E12 *82*, *98*, *163*; E15 *301*

Ruy Lopez (Spanish)
C65 *134*, *274*; C89 *258*; C92 *88*

Semi-Slav Defence
D44 *60*; D48 *8*, *111*

Sicilian Defence
B22 *128*; B30 *217*; B31 *117*; B33 *307*; B52 *289*; B63 *13*; B66 *50*; B80 *244*, *313*; B81 *228*; B88 *141*

Slav Defence
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